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# world FILM news

HOMAGE TO PAUL MUNI

HOORAY YOU'RE DEAD

DISNEY MENACE TO COMEDY

WAR CINEMAS IN SPAIN

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world FILM news

AND TELEVISION PROGRESS
(INCORPORATING CINEMA QUARTERLY)

VOL. 2 NO. 1 PRICE: ONE SHILLING APRIL 1937

# HOMAGE TO PAUL MUNI

A PAUL MUNI film is not a starring vehicle. We do not see Paul Muni in *The Story of Louis Pasteur;* we see the famous French chemist. He hides in the rôle; we cannot find him. In an Arliss film we can see nothing but Arliss; in a Laughton film nothing but Laughton; but in a Paul Muni film, Paul Muni is not to be found. He is gone, and another has taken his place: Scarface or Dr. Socrates or Louis Pasteur.

He is much too subtle to become a star. In fact he refuses to be an actor and insists on being a character. Others make up their outside for a part, and play it in their own style. Muni makes up his style: his personality: his individuality disappears. All good actors learn to get out of the limelight in favour of others. Paul Muni goes further. He stands aside in favour of the character he is playing.

It is a matter of considered policy with him; indeed it is his fundamental conception of his art. He sees his career not in terms of himself, but in terms of the characters he plays. Refusing to be typed, he is trying himself out in a variety of rôles. He feels within him powers not yet fully assessed. This is what marks him as different from others. Edward Robinson, for instance, is not unlike him in appearance and in his general technique of understatement. But Robinson is an older man: set, established. Paul Muni is not set, and if he can help it he never will be. We do not know just what he will be doing next: what character he will become.

He has artistic integrity and unselfishness (which is why Warner's *Louis Pasteur* had these qualities). Behind his work we can sense a "faithful, wondering mind." He has learned the lesson that if an actor's mind is faithful to his rôle, he need hardly act at all; things happen inside him, and the audience knows by intuition.

The rapport betweeen actor and audience is much more intimate in the cinema than in the theatre. The actor on the stage, no more than life size, has to throw his personality out to his audience; the cinema brings the audience close to the character, close enough to eavesdrop upon his muttered words, to spy upon the privacy of his mind. The actor can thus remain reserved: stay within himself; a man's inner self, his unexpressed feelings, his loneliness, may be the subject of drama on the screen as never on the stage. Paul Muni apprehends this. There is an "innermostness" in his work which makes him capable of tragedy. Perhaps he could not do Schubert (perhaps he could), but it is more than likely that he could do Beethoven.

He is young, serious, studious, and unique in grasping so early the principles of his art. Other men of his calibre learn too late that an actor should not exploit his individuality, but destroy it. From time to time Lionel Barrymore makes terrific efforts to be somebody else—but it is too late. He has been Lionel Barrymore too long. George Arliss has apparently never felt any desire to be anybody else, not even the Duke of Wellington. But Paul Muni has taken time by the forelock, and put Paul Muni out of the way for a start.

We have seen *The Story of Louis Pasteur* without Paul Muni. We shall soon see *The Good Earth* without Paul Muni. We look forward to not-seeing him in even greater films.

RUSSELL FERGUSON.

PAUL MUNI: Born 1897 near Vienna. Real name Muni Wiesenfreund.

Went to America in 1902 with his parents, theatrical people. Made stage debut at 11, as an old man. Appeared in Vaudeville. As a result of work in Theatre Guild was given the leading role in *We Americans* on Broadway.

His films include: *The Valiant. Seven Faces* (in which he portrayed eight characters), *Scarface, I am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang, The World Changes, Hi! Nellie, Black Fury, Border Town, Dr. Socrates, The Story of Louis Pasteur, The Enemy of Man, The Good Earth.* Now making *Emil Zola.*

**Hollywood sold us sex. crime. horror. history— now comes HEROISM**

# HOORAY YOU'RE DEAD

by RUSSELL FERGUSON

THE *Charge of the Light Brigade* broke records on its first run in the Carlton. This is not surprising. It is very big medicine: heap good, heap bad, according to your point of view. It is Hollywood's latest and most stunningly successful essay in the genre: Brown-on-Resolution—sons of guns—backs to the wall—up-guards-and-at-'em—and now theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do or die. The culmination, the actual charge, is as wonderful a piece of work as ever came out of Hollywood. Every cinematic device that could enhance a perfect cinematic subject has been used with brilliance; massed horsemen, acres of them, at full gallop: close-ups, partial shots, fades and mixes, flashing and thundering hooves; smoke, explosions, all built up to a magnificent climax; and this assault on the eye is supplemented by a sound-track that weds Tschaikovsky's 1812 overture to "God-the-All-Terrible," with Rule Britannia in attendance and the Marseillaise never very far away—an assault on the ear which matches the pictures to perfection, the whole punctuated with salvoes of artillery and underlined with a continuous deafening roar. The visual climax is irresistibly inspiring: a standard bearer is shot at about fifty miles an hour, dies at fifty-five miles an hour, and the falling flag is snatched from his dying hand and raised on high, still flying, by a trooper overtaking at sixty miles an hour.

Result—terrific heroism, particularly in the theatre. You feel brave, your eyes fill, your heart fills, you cannot keep your seat. *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.* A wave of mass-masochism floods the audience. You triumph over death: in imagination you fall forward with the dying man, your soul suspired floats heavenward above the smoke. Hooray, you're dead.

Unless—unless. Unless you hold tight, and think hard, and think straight. If you do, you will be filled with fear. You will realise as the sweat dries on your brow that you are face to face with one of the most terrifying things in the modern world—the cinema in the hands of an expert.

Let us think of the flag. It is not only the Union Jack: it is also the Roman eagle.

The Romans kept huge armies on the road, sun-scorched, plague- and vermin-ridden, steel shod, carrying all their gear, willing to march for days and fight like tigers in defence not of their own wretchedness but of Rome's opulence. How was it done?

It was done by means of *esprit de corps.* Reasoning was not the Roman soldier's forte, for he was illiterate, superstitious and credulous. Even so, brute-reason told him he was a fool to stand the racket, and rebellions and desertions were a constant feature of Roman history. But gradually in the course of generations the military caste in alliance with the priestcraft built a system of *esprit de corps* into the Roman armies. It was no use telling the men the truth, even if they could have understood it, for the system was not sufficiently just and humane to withstand the cold light of reason. So the generals told the men they were heroes, convinced them they were heroes, and the men became heroes. Rather than let down his unit, a Roman legionary would drag his tortured flesh for miles; rather than lose his standard he would throw away his life. He was taught daily until he accepted the principles without question that his century was the best in the cohort, his cohort the best in the legion, his legion the best in the army, his army the best in the Empire and his Empire the best in the world.

What were the instruments of propaganda? The men couldn't read, there was no press, anyhow. No radio, unless we say Rumor, a word which permeates Roman history. The instruments were Rhetoric and Religion. No Roman general was any use unless he was a skilled rhetorician. All movements were prefaced by pep-talks, some of which survive as models of oratory. The armies were attended by priests, who produced miracles (such as rainstorms and lightning or lack of either), inspected dead beasts, watched the skies, and fed the men with mumbo-jumbo to convince them they would win on the morrow. In such psychological circumstances the men did prodigies of valour and endurance as part of their daily task. The scheme worked for centuries.

The Roman eagle has become the Union Jack, the Hammer and Sickle, the Tricolor, the Stars and Stripes, the Swastika. Rome has left upon the world a pattern that time has not effaced. The terrible thing is, it is now sevenfold. There are now seven Roman armies in the world.

The instruments of military propaganda are much the same to-day as in Ancient Rome: *esprit de corps* nourished by rhetoric. The Dublin Fusiliers are the best regiment in the world. So are the Northumberland Fusiliers. The British Army is second to none. The German army is second to none. The American Army is second to none. Everybody is taller than everybody else.

In the midst of this feast of unreason, Hollywood discovers the art of Film Rhetoric. Pudovkin and Eisenstein invented it ten years ago, but Hollywood has just discovered it. And it is wonderful selling stuff. People love to be worked up into a state of heroism. If Hollywood decides to sell heroism at this particular juncture in international affairs, it will be just one more indication that a certain kind of people will do anything for money. Hollywood sold us sex, sold us crime, sold us horror, sold us history. Heaven forbid they sell us heroism, for it is a terribly dangerous thing, and if it is offered we shall buy it and buy it and buy it, like strong drink. The Germans and the Italians seem to be quite drunk, but we must try to keep sober.

It will need a strong head. For when you see *The Charge of the Light Brigade* you feel brave. And when you feel brave, if you think as I do, you feel afraid.

# EDITORIAL

## The Glittering Eye of Television

RECENT NEWS OF TELEVISION reveals swift and interesting developments. The picture improves and is well past experiment and novelty. The frame is small but it is in the nature of all media to have limits. They need not prevent a high standard of accomplishment if the limitations are understood and exploited.

This little screen provides a degree of intimacy which makes television only a remote relation to the cinema. The teacher of gardening with his blackboard illustrates, for example, a directness of appeal which is altogether extraordinary. He is a new phenomenon. He works in a new plane of communication: closer than the commentator of the films, closer even than the commentator of the lecture room. The focus of the screen and the darkness of television bring him, we are even willing to believe, closer than a neighbour. We can at least answer our neighbour back, but here the speaker can fix us with the glittering eye of the ancient mariner and control us completely. The possibilities in this direction are enormous. Those disembodied and never quite satisfactory voices of the Talks Department must soon become real, and lecturing, against every expectation in the world, will have a new lease of life.

The production staff at Alexandra Palace are to be congratulated on a remarkable discovery, and not even the second-rate masks and second-rate dancing of their mask dances nor the clumsy handling of their variety songs can conceal their achievement. We hear of a coaxial cable which will circle the West End of London and make the theatre stage available for television. The economic limitations of television must be consulted and there seems no doubt that the future of television entertainment is in the wings of the West End theatres. But, for the moment, our money is on the teacher of gardening. The West End theatres we know to our cost, but this gardening man we have never quite met before.

## A Great Record

MR. GORER'S COMPLAINT about the London Film Society's choice of programmes is answered on another page. The true answer, of course, is in the great and beneficial influence which the Society has exercised during its twelve years of life. It has struck ahead of the taste of the day, and the majority of the films which have later found notice in film history have first appeared on its screen. It has done as much for the producers as for the critics and has given new directors a first opportunity of showing their qualities.

Our only criticism is that the personnel of the Film Society is becoming somewhat superannuated. The old stagers hang on and it is just possible that they have not all moved as fast as the art of cinema itself. One feels sometimes that they are still searching, with a Teutonic candle, for the old familiar sensations of *Destiny* and *The Golem*. During the past two or three years there have been one or two cases of good films discarded and bad ones chosen—only, we believe, because the spirit of enquiry has not been as vivid as it might have been.

Without underestimating the difficulties of the Society or belittling the great work of the veterans, we suggest that more and more young men should be promoted to the Council of the Film Society. The art of sound film is a whole generation younger than the departed art of the silent cinema. Minds trained in the old medium may find it difficult to be competent judges of the new.

## The Growing Control of the City

RECENT EVENTS HAVE considerably changed the problem of the future control and policy of the Gaumont-British Picture Corporation Ltd., as described by the Film Council in the January issue of *W.F.N.* and "Money Behind the Screen." The decision of the board, acting on the advice of the Ostrer interests, to pay the current preference dividend was strongly contested both by Mr. Maxwell and by the three representatives of the Fox interests on the grounds that this payment was not justified by economic facts. The dissenting board members were reported to be taking legal advice on the situation.

A few days later the board met in order to decide whether or not to continue the production activities of the Corporation. Again there was the same alignment of conflicting opinions, Mr. Maxwell and the Fox representatives advocating, and the other board members opposing, the continuation of production. After an adjourned meeting (February 24, 1937) it was reported that an agreement had been reached between Mr. Ostrer acting for the Gaumont board and Mr. Woolf, acting for General Film Distributors Ltd. Production was to cease at the Shepherd's Bush Gaumont studios (except in the case of Gaumont News), G.F.D. at Pinewood and Gainsborough at Islington were each to produce four films per year which the former company was to distribute on behalf of the Gaumont organisation.

The entry of a fourth main partner, the Rank-Portal group, into the already sufficiently complex situation came as a surprise, although the existence of an apparently only slight link was already pointed out by the Film Council. But this is not all. Again, a few days later, it was reported that there might be a hitch in this latter agreement, since the consent of the Law Debenture Corporation Ltd. was required for any change in the company's affairs possibly affecting the value of the debentures for which they are the trustees.

This statement illustrates the general conclusion drawn by the Film Council that the increasing weight of debenture and other loan capital is tending to give a growing measure of control over the industry to a few powerful credit institutions. For the Law Debenture Corporation Ltd. are the trustees not only for the Gaumont-British Picture Corporation Debentures, but also for those of the Associated British Picture Corporation and other companies.

After an interval of several weeks, the Law Debenture Corporation Ltd. wrote to the Gaumont board that they had been informed by Council that "nothing has arisen to justify the intervention" by them as trustees for the Gaumont Debenture stock. The agreement which "scraps" the creative ability of most of the technicians and other employees at Shepherd's Bush, is thus allowed to go forward.

At the same time the appointment of yet another new member to the Gaumont board was announced. He is A. E. Messer, a director of the Equity and Law Life Assurance Society and of the British Law Insurance Co. Ltd.

## The Fantastic Toe

IT APPEARS THAT Herr Julius Streicher, a celebrated Jew-baiter, has turned his attention to the critics. We read in the papers that while rehearsals for a Viennese revue were proceeding recently at Nuremberg, this Nazi chieftain strode into the theatre followed by a group of critics, both old and young. The stage was cleared and the critics were forced by Herr Streicher to go on to the boards and attempt to perform some of the dances. "Naturally," says the correspondent, "the ungraceful antics of the untrained critics created much laughter."

We like this story, but are not altogether astonished by it. In our experience, the dance of criticism is practised in most countries. The motivating circumstances vary and there are subtler instruments of persuasion than the Nazi blackjack, but the little feet are seen only too often stepping to the tune of their masters. If anything surprises us it is the fact that the Nuremberg critics were clumsy. We British nationals pride ourselves on a far higher degree of skill.

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COVER STILL:

Paul Muni and Luise Rainer in *The Good Earth*


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# The Disney Menace to Comedy

by

## Jack Hulbert

In an interview with Danvers Williams he contributes an important analysis of present revolutionary trends of Comedy.

THE life of the film-comedian is growing gradually more arduous. It is much more difficult to make a comedy nowadays than it was five years ago. The reason for our distress is Walt Disney.

Disney has brought slapstick to such a state of perfection that no flesh and blood comedian can compete with him in this field.

A few years ago, if a comedian fell flat on his back, or was seen to run the wrong way down a moving staircase, the average audience went into fits of laughter. Disney has put an end to all that. Cinemagoers have seen Mickey Mouse fall a thousand feet from a precipice and get up unhurt. They have seen Donald Duck dissolve into thin air, and they have watched a whole orchestra carried up into the clouds by a cyclone. The gags of flesh-and-blood comedians fall pretty flat after that.

Of course, none of the great comedians ever relied entirely upon slapstick. It is well known that although pure slapstick goes down well in 'shorts', it becomes tedious in a feature-length film. I believe that even Disney's inspired nonsense, though always interesting from a technical point of view, would begin to drag a little if his pictures were an hour long instead of eight minutes.

All the really first-class film comedians purvey something more important than slapstick. Chaplin's forte is mime. The Marx Brothers are satirists. Eddie Cantor and Harold Lloyd both have a human as well as a comedy appeal.

But, in the past, we comedians all relied to some extent on knock-about humour. Now, unless we cut it from pictures altogether and find something else to replace it, we are doomed. I do not think this is too strong a word.

Of course, one could always try and compete with Disney by using advanced trick photography; but my own personal feelings is that however many good trick men I employed, I could never produce slapstick of the same inspired quality. And even if I could, there is another disadvantage. By concentrating on this type of humour I should become merely an automaton working in a comedy machine, and should lose all the human appeal which is almost my most important attribute.

Therefore, I decided months ago to abandon knock-about humour and make a more sophisticated, 'Thin Man' type of comedy. But I have had to make the change very gradually, for I realised that the public, unconscious of my predicament, would feel vaguely disappointed if my pictures did not contain a few knock-about gags, reminiscent of *Jack's the Boy* and other early successes.

My first picture embodying the new ideas was *Jack of All Trades*. When I purchased the story I fully intended making a straight sophisticated comedy; but my executives prevailed upon me to give the picture a knock-about ending.

### Undiluted Keystone

In the early sequences I was just a normal, rather fatuous young man drawn into a web of comic circumstances. The fire-raising scenes at the end of the picture were undiluted Keystone stuff.

I was gratified to notice that, although some critics preferred the slapstick, the majority of them favoured the more reasonable humour at the beginning. In the picture which I have just completed, *Take My Tip*, there is no slapstick at all.

What effect Disney will ultimately have on such comedians as Laurel and Hardy, Wheeler and Woolsey and Eddie Cantor I cannot surmise. I did notice, however, that in his last film, *The Milky Way*, Harold Lloyd adopted much the same policy as I.

Lloyd's tactics in the old silent success, *Safety Last*, in which he climbed a sky-scraper, wouldn't cause a modern audience very much amusement. Therefore, in *The Milky Way*, Lloyd concentrated on a type of humour which Disney's art does not cover. In the old days he was, like Mickey Mouse, a fantastic being who could hang a thousand feet above a busy thoroughfare on nothing more substantial than a braces button.

In *The Milky Way* Lloyd was a tawny, suburban youth (of a type we must all have met at one time or another) who became entangled in a mesh of comedy. The story was strong and reasonable, and the humour arose partly from Lloyd's utter normality and partly from the satirical jibes which filled the film.

Upon the Marx Brothers Disney can have little or no effect: they purvey a brand of humour entirely different from anything else on stage or screen. Their satire is too advanced and too closely linked with the subconscious mind ever to appeal to the ordinary cinemagoer, but to the connoisseur of comedy they are what Yehudi Mehuhin must be to the professional musician.

I understand that efforts are being made to popularise the mad Marx's, but that seems to me to be as difficult a proposition as trying to popularise Einstein. As some are born poets, so the Marx Brothers were born clowns. Their humour is inimitable. Rob them of their extreme sophistication and their nonsense would become meaningless.

The famous British team of Walls and Lynn is similarly unaffected by Disney, but for a very different reason. Walls and Lynn

## Jack Hulbert (contd.)

are the best exponents we have of a type of purely British burlesque. Their technique is theatrical and the characters they have created are all exaggerated specimens of English types: the rotter, the B.F., the henpecked husband. Their comedy is well loved and understood in this country and over here nothing could possibly shake their popularity.

Many well-informed critics hold the view that the person hardest hit by Disney is Charlie Chaplin. I do not altogether agree. Although Chaplin has always relied a great deal on knock-about humour, his chief appeal for me has always been his miming. What other actor in the world could have put so much humour and pathos into that scene in *Modern Times* where he developed St. Vitus Dance? Chaplin is the greatest individual artist the screen has ever known. I have never once seen him try to be funny and fail. He can express, by moving a tea-cup, what it would take the average comedian a tableful of crockery to express.

### Too great a Classic

The trouble with Chaplin is that he is too great a classic. His problem is how to alter his technique without impairing the little figure which he has made famous.

I would, personally, like to see the same Chaplin, perhaps a shade less exaggerated and more in keeping with the modern technique, in an ordinary sound film, in which he alone remained silent. Harpo has managed to do this quite successfully. Why not Chaplin?

I trust you are beginning to see what a worrying thing it is being a screen comedian. Over and above one's continual fight to move with the times and not become outmoded,there are a thousand other things to be considered.

### "Speed" in humour

There is, for example, the immense question of public taste. What do audiences want? What do they laugh at?

English people prefer a slower type of humour than that which is popular in America. This is quite natural, for life in America is much faster than here. If you study German comedy you will find that their humour is even slower. Now, while my following is extensively English, I also have quite a large public in America. So I have to be careful to turn out a type of humour which is not unintelligibly fast in England, nor laboriously slow in the United States.

Thus, an incident which the Marx Brothers would put over in one shot, and a German comedian would put over in five shots, and which I would normally put over in three shots, I do actually in two. Then I hope that it will satisfy the public of both countries. Every one of my scenes has to be thought out in this way.

When I have taken a hundred or so scenes, all of which are more or less humorous, they are shown to a select gathering. Some of the shots, which seemed funniest in the making, fail to raise a laugh and have to be cut.

Indeed, the whole process of making a comedy is as cold and as calculated as a geometrical theorem. There is no such thing as impromptu humour on the screen. The more seriously one works, the better the results.

# Came "The Dawn"*

## by NORRIS DAVIDSON

London, and other film societies are now seeing *The Dawn*, the first entirely Irish film ever made. The story of its making reverses movie history for instead of building an industry and then turning out films the producers made the film and are now sitting back and seeing about the possibilities of yet another native industry. The native product is always interesting, and this one particularly so, for the necessity of creating the story resulted in the film, another reversal of the process of deciding to make a film for X and Y in the leads and then creating a sympathetic story for them.

Tom Cooper, author, director and one of the chief actors in the story, had no further experience of movies than a study of what was shown in the cinema which he himself owns. Indeed, as one critic remarked, the director shows for his chosen medium not respect but, rather, impatience. And it is this impatience which is the clue to the life and sincerity of *The Dawn;* the story *has* to be made. Sincerity is a term which has been used to justify an enormous footage of incompetence, but not so in *The Dawn.*

The story is superb. Story and dialogue form a part of Ireland of 1920 and a part of the life of its actors. It is only the shadowy prologue, set in the last century, which fails to be convincing and fails because it was not immediately alive to the producers of the film.

I saw *The Dawn* for the third time when it was being run for an audience of some of England's younger directors and critics. Its technical faults are obvious, too obvious for comment, eloquent of the struggle for a beginning which Hibernia Films has made—a struggle which more experienced men would not have attempted, and *The Dawn* would prove them wrong.

By now the story of its production is fairly well known; short lengths of film developed in a chemist's shop, experiments with more or less home-made sound equipment, and then the start. The tiny studio is lit by converted trawler's lights, the home-made microphone boom squeaked when moved and so speakers could not be followed about the studio, the tripod of the Studio Debrie was made in the Director's garage, there was not one professional actor in the whole bunch—and with that *The Dawn* began. It began either with blind arrogance or in the courageous spirit of Flaherty returning to the Far North to remake *Nanook* after the destruction of most of the first negative. This film *is* Ireland, and the incredible thing is that men who had actually lived a part of the story should not have been too close to it to distinguish between what was important to them and what is important to an audience.

The film is non-propagandist, it has no star to create, often its apparent understatement reveals something with dazzling simplicity. In one sequence an I.R.A. column resting in the hills is brought news of the arrival of the Black and Tans (English mercenaries) at the local barracks. The messenger describes their odd uniforms, their appearance, "——and they don't like us", he concludes, "——They don't like us"——immediately one knows that the Kerry voice has spoken the only possible line, a line which all the MacArthurs and Biro's in the world could not have thought up in a million years. No menacing close-ups, no involuntary tightening of fingers on triggers, it is just a mid-shot of the rather blown messenger sitting on the grass and giving his news. "——and they don't like us."

Again, compare the street-singer who postures in *The Informer* and *The Plough and the Stars* with the sweet voice which sings unconcernedly of

"——cold Sergeant Death——"

who stalked the country in those days.

Throughout the picture the Director does incredible things. One of the two heroes is killed, and killed in Long Shot, stumbling wounded on the brow of a hill. The story demands that and gets it. A star actor in the part would have demanded a dying scene, and the story would have lost. One recalls, too, the very last hundred feet of the enormously moving climax in which the Director dares to cut in an "insert" of a letter, flouting all studio conventions, substituting a letter for what might have been a ticklish speech and getting away with it adroitly.

If the occasionally slow tempo and lack of certainty in the direction is the result of inexperience,then *The Dawn* as a whole is a fine beginning, but if it indicates that the Director was deliberately feeling his way in a first production then we are going to hear a great deal more of Hibernia Films. Their's can be the creation of an Irish idiom in the cinema.

**THE DAWN.* Hibernia Films, Killarney, Ireland. Directed by Thomas Cooper.

*"Comrades, Arise"*

# WAR CINEMAS IN SPAIN

*by Dr. Manfred Georg*

SPANISH CINEMAS ARE still well patronised, in spite of the civil war. One has to be punctual for the last performance at 10 o'clock; certainly, as, in most towns, it is impossible otherwise to find the cinema entrance in the pitch darkness, unless one brings a torch. It is not till one o'clock at the earliest that the searchlights from the air-raids show up the streets a little. In fact there is no stopping the Spaniards from going to "the pictures." Even in Madrid, the theatres which have not been destroyed by bombardment, go on with their programmes, just as usual. If rebel 'planes fly over, the audience gets to its feet with one accord and sings hymns of defiance, after which it sits down again, quite calmly, while the defence batteries outside rattle out a grim accompaniment to the booming of the cannon.

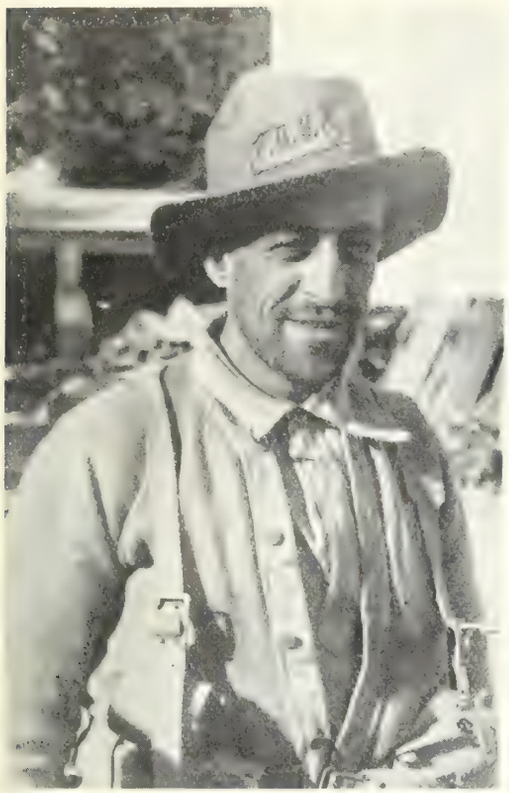
Cinema shows have become extraordinarily cheap. Modern films play little part in the programmes in Alicante, Valencia, and Madrid—except for the Russian ones with their collective revolutionary themes, particularly *Chapayev* and *We from Kronstadt*. But films with Chaplin and Shirley Temple and the older productions are the favourites. In Barcelona it is different. There they get the very newest American pictures and for one peseta it is possible to see three American long films.

The Civil War has produced, from both sides, news shorts which are full of significant technical flaws. On the other hand they are so real and have been obtained at such risk to the photographers that their daring leaves one stunned. But the most impressive experience is that of sitting among the people while they watch the glorification of their struggle in the Civil War shown on the screen. The front seats are packed with soldiers—still in their army outfit. War films showing battles in Madrid and around Aragon are received by the public with much enthusiasm. Here and there, one sees groups of weeping women, hears a scream, recognises the village, or regiment or scene of battle one knew so well a few weeks ago. The two chief newsreels showing in Spain are the rebel *Los Aguilochos de la Fai* and *La dernière Minute*. Besides these there are Fox and Paramount newsreels.

The management of film affairs shows improvement at the present time only in Catalonia which has been up to now the part of Spain least affected by the war. In Barcelona, M. José Carner-Ribalta, the commissioner for plays and films, is always ready to supply an answer to any questions that may be raised. The old firms go on as before, under capitalist management and continue to produce films. Provisional experiments are being carried out, e.g. a musical film, *Bohemios;* an Opera film, *Molinos de Viento;* and a thriller, *Miedo* (Fear). Besides these, two "guidance" films, dealing with social problems, are being prepared. They were ordered by the Syndicate for Public Entertainment.

Of course, film companies are under government control. Each film represents a company enterprise, which involves daily sums amounting to between 125 and 250 pesetas a week.

## War Cinemas in Spain (contd.)



Militiaman on the Aragon Front

The management's chief aim is to avoid unemployment and to keep everyone connected with films in a post, so far as that is possible till conditions are normal again. Accordingly, finance is the main concern, and, while the prices of seats in the cinemas have been reduced, programmes have been made much longer, and variety—and orchestra—performances have been introduced.

But, for a modern film industry, there is one great drawback—the lack (temporarily, of course) of the necessary technicians.

Foreign films are imported by private concerns,which are, however, like all Spanish companies, controlled by trades unions.

Spaniards are particularly fond of films. There are 2,500 cinemas in the country, and eight hundred of these in Catalonia. Eighty per cent. of the Spanish population attends the cinema.

In 1936 alone, America made 200,000,000 pesetas from the films it sent to Spain. Problem pictures are not much patronised. There has to be a great deal of action. James Cagney is a greater favourite than Greta Garbo, and Chaplin is far ahead of Marlene Dietrich. Gangster and Russian films score most points; sentimental films, such as *Masquerade*, and musical films have varied results.

Films for schools and factories are the most important projects for the near future. They will supplement the usual instruction given. Pictures about safety-first and politics, and special programmes for the peasants are under way, and also educational films that are in accordance with the campaign against old-fashioned methods.

In general, the new Spanish films have practically the same themes to work with as the Russian, and they ought to be made along the same lines: entertainment films based on history, and educational films which aim at extending the field of culture. Ordinary film production will go on for some time, for the sake of providing employment (and perhaps to replace foreign pictures which go astray), until the restoration of peace makes possible a normal arrangement for the Government's new production of films on a social basis.

## *Nationalism v. Internationalism*

### "MESSAGE FROM GENEVA"
### "LINE TO THE TSCHIERVA HUT"
### "MEN OF THE ALPS"

(G.P.O. Film Unit. Production: John Grierson, Direction: Alberto Cavalcanti. Camera: John Taylor).

These three shorts appear to be a by-product of the main Cavalcanti-Priestley film *We Live in Two Worlds*, for which they are certainly a good augury.

It is very pleasant to see documentaries in which the visuals have battled their way back to pride of place despite the urgent claims of the sound track. All three films are good to look at, both from the point of view of photography and cutting.

*Message from Geneva* is a fast moving and well-analysed presentation of the League of Nations communications tie-ups.

*Men of the Alps* draws a vivid picture of the life of Switzerland and *Line to the Tschierva Hut* is a straightforward documentary (in the best sense of the word) of the building of a telephone line up to an Alpine fastness.

There is an underlying motif in each of these films—a presentation of the present ideological conflict between nationalism and internationalism. *We live in Two Worlds* will presumably put this across in full. Meantime we can be thankful for three good-looking and interesting shorts which hint at one of the most pressing problems of modern civilisation.

C. M.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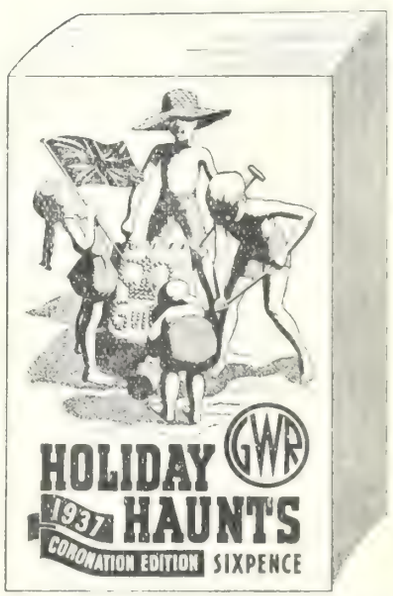


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# Mothers Beware!

## *ROBERT DONAT WARNS HOPEFUL JUVENILES*

*Donat and Dietrich in "Knight without Armour"*

### PROLOGUE

When Fond Young Mothers bring me their Wonderful Children (the image of Shirley Temple and/or Freddie Bartholomew, don't you think?) I am always certain of three things: (1) they are twelve years older than they look; (2) they lisp; and (3) they can sing "You and the Night and the Music Fill Me with Flaming Desire" (and *will* if you are not careful).

If I have been lucky enough to escape the song, I always give them a copy of my Brief History of Film Acting:

### PART I. WAITING

*Tests.*

One's first film test is always made in the dead of night. Immediately after an extremely heavy stage performance I was informed that a high-speed car was waiting to take me out to the studios. Would I please hurry as everything was ready for me! I hurried. How I hurried! I arrived at the studio and found the entire staff in a frenzy. A make-up was slapped on me. I was given a script. I was taken on to the studio floor. There I waited: for three hours. At 3.45 a.m. I was given some sandwiches and a whisky and soda. At 4 a.m. I was given three more whiskies and sodas. At 4.30, not sure whether I was about to make a film test or was captaining the English side against Australia, the test was taken.

Two days later I was shown the test. The Director was awfully apologetic—for two reasons: I was not "photogénique," and my eyes suffered from a defect known technically as "halation." After seeing the test run through I came to the conclusion that "halation" was a technical expression describing the effects of four double whiskies and sodas administered just before dawn.

### PART II. WAITING

*More Tests.*

Again I am rushed on to the studio floor. I am wearing full evening dress, according to instructions. The "set" prepared for me is a modern English drawing-room—style, Elstree. The Director, who is very kind, pithily describes the scene we are about to shoot—"You come down the stairs and there is a girl waiting by the table. (We haven't got a girl as a matter of fact, but don't let that worry you). She is standing just about there; you are carrying a bouquet. (We haven't got a bouquet—use this book.) By the way, you oughtn't to be in evening-dress, but that doesn't really matter. O.K.? Turn over." I wasn't sure if this order applied to me but as there was no protest when I didn't turn over (I couldn't have anyway—you've no idea how stiff that shirt was or how far it reached) I presumed it didn't. I made my entrance down the steps with my bouquet, trying to look as if I didn't suffer from halation and as if I were the most photogénique subject in Christendom, only to hear the Director shout out: "By the way, can you talk with a Canadian accent? I forgot to tell you you're a Canadian backwoodsman." Two days elapsed. The Director was *very* sorry but Elstree considered me "Too Romantic." I decided to give up the screen and live a pure life in pursuit of Art. (Note, at this time Hollywood were literally screaming out for romantic actors.)

### PART III. WAITING

*Three Years Later. Another Test.*

"Please hurry, Mr. Donat, we're ready for you. You've kept us waiting, you know." The make-up man is waiting; the technical staff is waiting; the Director is waiting; the Great British Public is waiting. My starving wife and baby are also waiting. I am rushed on to the floor. I see: (1) a rostrum with a chair upon it; (2) a couple of lights; (3) a camera; (4) a Woman Director.

Item number four is fuming. She thinks I am "Ham"; she doesn't want me in the picture anyway. She has no intention of the test being a good one. The camera begins to turn. The lights flicker but the test goes on. I sit there mumbling my words. The lady Director interrupts me. I fluff, I stammer, I splutter. She splutters. The lights splutter. The lady Director screams "cut," but before they have time to stop the film I sit back in my chair and laugh. And laugh. And laugh. I make up my mind to become a waiter. Two days later the lady Director sees the test. It is atrocious; but during the last moment of the test a Hungarian genius happens to look into the theatre and see a bewildered young actor expressing his opinion of the film industry in terms of laughter. The lights go up. "Well," says the lady Director triumphantly, "what do you think of him?" "Marvellous!" says Alexander Korda, "that burst of laughter is the most spontaneous thing I have ever seen on the screen." I am given a contract.

### EPILOGUE

*September* 1934.

I have overslept. The high-speed car is waiting at the door. It's a Rolls. I am raced to the studio. The make-up artist is waiting. The Productions Manager is waiting. The Leading Lady is waiting. At last I get on the floor. They have been waiting for three hours. But now there is a difference. I am a star (see *Film Weekly*). So we all wait together. René Clair is the most amusing man you could possibly wish to have to wait with. We break for lunch. At 3.30 we shoot our first scene. It is lousy. At 4.30 we re-take it. At 6.30 the Productions Manager comes on the set. He introduces me to a titled relative who says she thinks I am wonderful. At 6.35 the Productions Manager asks me if I will work all night.

*Finale.*

We work all night.

(*By courtesy of Robert Donat and The Cherwell*)

# Sabu

*by*

*David*

*Flaherty*

"Sabu in his youth and innocence gives a dignity to the Indian people one has never seen before on the screen" said John Grierson in last month's issue of W.F.N.

SABU is the miracle we had hoped to find in India. Born in the jungles of Mysore, he was found, rather ragged and not outstandingly clean, playing about the elephant stables of the Maharaja. He is an orphan; his father, a mahout, died in the service of the Maharaja. Sabu lived with his elder brother, who drove a taxi in the town of Mysore. Sabu drew from the Mysore Government his father's pension at the rate of two rupees (three shillings) a month. The miracle was that Sabu was at once a mahout, photogenic and a natural actor. He had no fear. With us he was in his element, since most of *Elephant Boy* was shot in the jungle where he was born, among elephants and elephant folk that he knew. But London was another matter.

When last June Sabu arrived with his brother and his Brahmin teacher, he could speak almost no English beyond the lines which had been laboriously taught him. He had always been, however, remarkably quick in understanding what was said to him.

This brief account of his impressions here will lack the note of naïveté one would expect. This is because Sabu's is no ordinary character. His reactions to people and things, to what he has seen in London, reveal a depth and maturity quite unexpected.

Save for his flaming red turban, Sabu dresses like an English boy. Ragged as he was when we first saw him, he now is meticulously careful in his dress, always immaculately groomed. His turban is almost a part of his anatomy; he would never be seen without it. This has nothing to do with his religion, but he has had to wear his hair so long for the film that people might banteringly call him "girl." Winding on his turban (no one can do it but Sabu) is almost a rite, an operation deft, precise, deliberate, which consumes not seconds but minutes. No star of the cinema is more careful of his appearance than this young mahout with two suits to his name. The jungle has become completely cosmopolitan; certainly this is at least a minor miracle.

There were the inevitable newspaper interviews. The reporters got the impression of a fine little fellow, a bit shy, yet with a certain sturdiness and composure which they could not help remarking. They were aware of a certain reserve and dignity in the little boy's bearing, undoubtedly the mark of Islam, for Sabu is fully conscious that Mohammedans are the best people in the world. But his smile when it broke through this reserve they found all the more charming. However, they were able to get little out of him.

"Do you like London?"

A smile, rather shy. "Yes."

"Are you homesick for India?"

A broader, confident smile. "No."

We would then invent questions relating to Mysore, to his own life there, in the hope of bringing forth a picturesque reply.

"Do you miss Kala Nag?" A smile, not as wistful as we had hoped. (Kala Nag, of course, is Sabu's elephant in the film.)

"Does the traffic of London frighten you more than herd of wild elephants?" Sabu laughed outright at the naïveté of the question, indicating clearly that he was afraid neither of London's traffic nor of the wild elephants.

One soon learns that it is fruitless and unnecessary to "talk down" to Sabu. His is an enquiring mind, however, and his Brahmin teacher was driven nearly frantic with Sabu's endless, minute questions. He wanted the last details on ships, aeroplanes, wireless, trick photography, war, government, finance, religion.

The teacher is an intelligent young man with some education, and he soon found his way about London. Sabu was taken to the parks, where the band was playing; to the British Museum, where his eyes lit up on seeing the robes and weapons of Tipu, sultan of Mysore; to the Natural History Museum, where he puzzled not a little over the African female elephant with long tusks; to the Science Museum, where the exhibits of machinery fascinated him and provoked questions which the poor teacher racked his brains to answer; to the Regent's Park Zoo where he was given a ride on a cow elephant. The elephant tried to bolt, but Sabu was easily a match for her. He remarked, on dismounting, that the elephants here were very small. (His own Kala Nag, one of the largest elephants in India, stands nine feet eight inches from the withers.)

The art galleries he did not find so interesting. Not so interesting as Madame Tussaud's, where he recognised at least three figures he knew—Charlie Chaplin, Mahatma Gandhi, and King Edward VIII.

He has been sculptured by Lady Kennet, painted by Egerton Cooper, has broadcast over the B.B.C., and televised at Alexandra Palace.

Sabu's frequent attendance at cinemas during his leisure time has been quite the reverse of demoralizing. It is only a manifestation of his burning desire to improve himself, his speech, his manners. He loved *David Copperfield*, quite apart from the inevitable allusions to himself as an Indian Freddie Bartholomew. Of course he loved Charlie Chaplin in *Modern Times* and, naturally, Mickey Mouse.

*Elephant Boy* was completed at Denham. There were nearly two months of exterior night shooting, beginning early in September. The nights grew steadily colder, and there was some concern over Sabu, whose costume was a loin cloth and a turban. The English actors suffered from colds, but the boy from the warm jungles caught not the slightest trace of one.

Sabu has no illusions as to his future. He knows that the life of a boy star in the films is short. After *Elephant Boy* another picture, another year, perhaps at the outside two. He is saving his money. With part of it he is paying his way at a boarding school near the studios at Denham, where foreign boys are taught English. Good friends found the school for him, and he likes it. When he goes back to Mysore, as he probably will one day, he will have added to his good earthy wisdom some of the knowledge that is power.

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# A COMMON FLAG FOR BRITISH FILMS

## *Voice from the Past*

*Copy of an article that appeared in "The Film Renter and Moving Picture News," March 25th, 1922, headed*
*AFFILIATION OF TRADE ASSOCIATIONS, by* **FRANK HILL,** *Secretary of the Renters' Society.*

Personally I have for a very long time felt that an association or federation, or by whatever other title such a body would be called, must eventually be formed. It would be for the good of the industry as a whole.

If one regards the principal industries, one finds that each of them has one body which is capable of speaking and acting in vital matters for the industry as a whole. In the cinema industry, although much good work has been done by the various organisations that exist, I nevertheless think that much time is spent in considering matters of detail affecting the particular sections, which could often with advantage be left to individuals, and insufficient time is spent in concentrating upon matters which affect, or are likely to affect, the trade as a whole. If a trade body could be so constituted that it would have the absolute confidence of the industry as a whole, I think it would be all to the good of the various sections concerned, and committees of those sections could be constituted to deal more particularly in detail with matters affecting their sections.

Although the present moment (*i.e.* 1922) may perhaps be a little inopportune, I am firmly convinced that eventually, perhaps at long last, a trade body consisting of exhibitors, renters, manufacturers, and other vitally interested will have to be established. The industry is one which, to my mind, ought not to be viewed so much from the sectional standpoint, but is one which should be indivisible, seeing that it should be the object of the manufacturer to produce the very highest class of film possible without ignoring the principles of real economics; that the renter should endeavour, and, indeed, be pleased to handle only those films which would bring credit to the industry as well as profit to him; and that the exhibitor should likewise endeavour to give the very best form of entertainment procurable, paying more attention to the psychology of the human mind, and more particularly his patrons, than he has hitherto done, and bearing always in mind the power of the screen and its potency for good or evil.

Those engaged in the respective sections of the trade must look several years ahead instead of at what is happening to-day. They will then realise that each is dependent one upon the other, and that it is folly for any one section to strive to have its own way in any particular matter.

If a trade body existed, such as I envisage, there would no doubt from time to time arise matters affecting one or other of the sections, but instead of any particular section endeavouring by all the means in its power to impose its ideas upon the other sections, the final adjudication would be in the hands of that trade body, the members of which should be able to view matters from a lofty standpoint, have the capacity of long-sightedness, and be capable of sound judgment.

## *By The Film Council*

THE chaotic state of British production finance, the "Quota Quickie" problem, conflicting views on Quota assessment, British-American rivalry, the booking controversy, the dissatisfaction voiced by a large majority of exhibitors with the present character of British films—all these symptoms selected at random by a casual glance at the trade press indicate a state of primeval anarchy and wasteful cross-purposes, wholly out of proportion to the position which the Film Industry to-day occupies in our national economy.

To mend this state of affairs, regarded as intolerable by all sections of the trade, the Moyne Committee in its recent report recommended the establishment of a Film Commission having statutory control over all sections of the industry in many matters affecting its common welfare. While administering the laws concerning the trade, it is suggested that this commission should also determine from year to year the degree of protection to be afforded by the quota to home production; that it should assess the quality of British films for the purposes of quota registration, and, presumably in view of its close association with the trade, that it should have a considerable influence on the policy of the organisation which the Moyne Committee urges the government to set up for the financing of British production.

### Government Commission Rejected

Together with the other recommendations of the Moyne Committee this suggestion was submitted by the Board of Trade to the sectional organisations of the industry for their comment. While the producers organised in the Film Group of the F.B.I. give their qualified approval to the proposal, provided the suggested Committee has no power to interfere with the administration of individual businesses, and that its ability to reject films on the grounds of quality are restricted to those costing less than £1 per foot, both the renters (K.R.S.) and the exhibitors (C.E.A.) reject the idea of a government commission in principle.

All sections agree in regarding as impracticable the notion that the industry's problems can be solved by a body consisting solely of persons without expert knowledge of the film trade. The renters fear—and they are to some extent supported in this by the producers—that any control by an outside body over the financing and production of films will have the effect of discouraging prospective investors. And they regard a quality test for films as impracticable in view of the diversity of tastes they must necessarily cater for. In their view the Board of Trade is fully competent to administer any future film legislation.

The exhibitors propose, as an alternative to the suggested government commission, that a compulsory arbitration court be established by the government for the sole purpose of settling trade disputes. It should be a court of last instance to which cases are referred that cannot be settled by a voluntary conciliation joint committee set up by the three sections of the industry. This is suggested "as a means of enabling the trade to preserve its dignity, to settle its problems within itself, and to leave it with that freedom to work within reasonable limits which is so essential if progress is to be maintained."

### Trade Committee Approved

Negotiations have taken place between the C.E.A. and the K.R.S. concerning this proposal. Both bodies agree to the principle of a voluntary joint committee with an independent chairman, but the renters appear to reject the exhibitors' demand for compulsory arbitration machinery.

Since, therefore, the suggestion of a large measure of government control over the industry is rejected outright by its two most powerful organisations, and in many important respects also by the producers, the trade and the public it is supposed to serve are faced with the alternative of allowing the present chaos to continue or else of finding a voluntary basis for setting the British film house in order.

The former alternative is unthinkable and will no longer be tolerated either by the public or by those who are expected to finance the industry. The latter is by no means a new problem. The article by Frank Hill, which we reprint on this page from *The Film Renter and Moving Picture News* of March 25th, 1922, shows that already 15 years ago the more clear-sighted members of the industry realised the need for a joint organisation.

### Public Service Comes First

The suggestion for a joint conciliation committee advocated by the C.E.A. is a move in the right direction, especially if agreement can be reached on the principle of compulsory arbitration, but everyone will agree that it only touches the fringe of the problem. Far more important than the settlement of inter-trade contract disputes is the standard of service which the industry as a whole provides for its many-sectioned public. On the public's increasing interest in films depends the wel-

*(Continued overleaf)*

## A Common Flag (contd.)

fare of the industry in all its sections and the willingness of investors to provide its finance.

But the public is not interested how its 9*d.* entrance fee is divided among exhibitors, renters and producers. What it wants, and what therefore the industry as a whole must want, are films it considers worth spending its 9*d.* on. The fruitful collaboration between producers, renters and exhibitors, which alone can help to solve the industry's problems, must therefore go beyond the settlement of contract terms. It must penetrate to the core of the matter and guide the production—and import—policy of the films to be released in this market.

Recent experiences provide sufficient evidence for the sorry lack of contact even between two so obviously interested parties as the producers who spend the money invested in films and the exhibitors who are expected to return it. Nor is there any doubt concerning the disastrous consequences of this mutual isolation.

But to be solved, the problem requires more than the collaboration between the various sections of the industry. It requires, above all, a constant study by the trade as a whole of the public with its many audience types and their constantly changing tastes. A production policy based on a knowledge of audience tastes and agreed upon by all the sections of the trade will not only eliminate the present state of flagrant waste and provide full scope for truly creative work: it will also bring the industry to that state of prosperity that will make it easier to agree upon an equitable division of its revenue.

## Guide its Policy

These ideas are by no means utopian. The establishment of a voluntary co-ordinating body to deal with the problems of the trade as a whole, to study its market, and to guide its policy, as well as to settle its internal disputes, is a necessity if the British film trade wishes to escape both from government control and from its present chaos and an ultimate control by its dissatisfied creditors.

*W.F.N.* therefore urges the trade to follow the lead of all the major industries at the present time and to set up its own co-ordinating organisation, recruited from representatives of all the main sections of the trade with an independent chairman and a small but highly qualified research staff. This organisation should define the code of trade practices mutually agreed upon by all concerned and act as a court of arbitration. It should also, however, act as the industry's public relations department. It should study its market and watch its constantly changing conditions. It should provide the information that will enable the trade to determine its major problems of policy and reconcile the conflicting aims of its various sections. Its experience in liaison work between the industry and its public and in helping the former to adjust its supply to the conditions of the actual demand may also in time contribute towards a solution of the censorship problem, more satisfactory than the present arrangement.

# LETTERS

## Ziegfeld Cut?

To suburban cinemas last week went Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's latest "picture of the generation"—the enormous, glamorous, enervating *The Great Ziegfeld* after record runs in several West End houses. Many of these cinemas in the suburbs declared in their trailers and front-of-the-house bills that the entire, uncut version was on show for their patrons' ninepence or shilling, but the alert spectator noticed one or more passages where the film had clearly been cut.

Not justified is this procedure because of *Ziegfeld's* unwieldy length, for the chances are about even that any and every West End film will be cut or mutilated before the patrons of the suburbs and provinces, who constitute the major market, get their chance to see it. This may be legally done by the film's renters, as film is a commodity of which renters buy the copyright. The exhibitor, however, merely hires the films he shows, and if the copy he returns differs from the one he hires, the renters have power to prosecute, power which is seldom if ever used. They turn a blind eye to the racket, and in any case they are not always able to tell when an exhibitor cuts, for film is a malleable product. The clever cinema-owner can make three or four cuts and replace the passages without anybody knowing but the spectator who takes an interest in films or who has seen the show before.

A happy little racket is this, for everyone but the picturegoer—who pays the piper and should call the tune. Some cinema operators even cut out cinema lovelies for their bedroom walls, and the story is told of an exhibitor who made so many cuts that the baby in a routine film about divorce and reconciliation was completely eliminated, and the audience was left mystified at the dialogue which kept referring to an apparently non-existent chee-ild.

RODERIC PAPINEAU

## The Pope and Robert Herring

Quite a number of people well intentioned towards the Cinema Industry appear to be somewhat confused in their line of thinking as to the attitude and pronouncements on the Censorship of films by certain religious authorities. I have in mind particularly the Pope's Encyclical on films (Vigilante Cura) and the Legion of Decency. Both were the the object of attack in an article "Religion and the Screen," I read in the autumn issue of *Sight and Sound.* The contributor, Mr. Herring, film critic of the *Manchester Guardian,* says he could "the more readily stomach the difficulties put in the way of *St. Joan* and *Green Pastures* if he knew what encouragement they had received from Rome. The Pope answers him by anticipation in the Encyclical:

"Were it possible, it would in itself be desirable to establish a single list for the entire world, because all live under the same moral law. Since, however, there is here question of pictures which interest all classes of society, the great and the humble, the learned and the unlettered, the judgment passed upon a film cannot be the same in each case and in all respects. Indeed, circumstances, usages, and forms vary from country to country, so that it does not seem practical to have a single list for all the world."

But there is far more to be said than that. Mr. Herring's implication that the Pope envisaged only evil and subversive films is demonstrably unfair. "Good motion pictures," says the Encyclical, "are capable of exercising a profoundly moral influence upon those who see them. In addition to affording recreation, they are able to arouse noble ideals of life, to communicate valuable conceptions, to impart a better knowledge of the history and the beauties of the Fatherland and of other countries, to present truth and virtue under attractive forms, to create, or at least to favour understanding among nations, social classes, and races, to champion the cause of justice, to give new life to the claims of virtue, and to contribute positively to the genesis of a just social order in the world."

May I suggest to these critics that a deeper acquaintance with history and literature, together with a measure of common sense, will aid the digestion.

ARTHUR LESLIE

## Stalemate?

You honour me by reference in the Editorial Notes of your current issue to the fact of my recent election as a Governor of the British Film Institute, on the nomination of the Film Producers' Group of the F.B.I.

But why stalemate? Is the "mate" any "staler" than it was, and if so why?

It is true that the Secretaries of two trade Organisations are now members of the Governing Body of the Institute, but they are only two among nine Governors. Is it suggested that two such "Mates" will be responsible for steering the ship into unchartered waters? May they not, perhaps, help to guide the ship on a true course?

My limited knowledge of the game of chess (I crave pardon for this mixture of metaphor) leads me to believe that there cannot be stalemate until the King is no longer able to make a move. I hope you do not infer that I am desirous, even if I were capable, of blocking up all the spaces on the board where the King might seek refuge from momentary embarrassment.

If I may say so, I venture to think you misinterpret my mission. While I will certainly do all that lies in my power to protect the interests of commercial producers should they be in need of protection in the Institute, my purpose as a Governor is and will be to assist that body and help it in its practical developments, using the influence and prestige of those who nominated me to that end as far as possible.

M. NEVILLE KEARNEY

## As You Like It

Unselfish Bergner, fame unseeking,
Your gentleness seems divine,
The shrinking blossom coyly peeping
Bows to modesty like thine.
Centuries hence, your fame still living,
You'll seem great and Shakespeare small,
They'll know it was your gracious giving
That let his name appear at all.

J. L. G.

# RE-SEEING BLACKMAIL

## by Harry Watt

★

HITCHCOCK made *Blackmail* during that hectic period just after Al Jolson's sobsongs had knocked the film business for a hoop. It was started silent, and had gaily gone half way on its schedule before it was realised that silent films were dead and sound films had really arrived. So with new equipment, new technicians and a new medium, Hitch finished *Blackmail* as his first sound film. And he made a grand job. There is a freshness about the approach to sound in it that is positively startling in these days of stereotyped dialogue and balanced background. Of course, the quality of the sound was frightful. Burps and hoops punctuated the conversations. Anny Ondra mouthed her shop-girl's words in front of the camera, while Joan Barry minced Mayfair into the microphone off the set. But in spite of all this the fact remains that in *Blackmail* Hitch didn't think of sound as a new trick to put words into his characters' mouths—he thought of it as a new dramatic medium, something with which to build up suspense, drama, and interest. In the silent sections he used music. Music for reels at a time. And it worked. The action was quicker and just as intense. There was no feeling of artificiality through lack of speech. And where there was speech it was used almost wholly for dramatic effect, not to prove to the audience that the actors had uvulas and larynxes.

The story is of a shop-girl who, tiring of her police boy friend, gets off with an artist who takes her to his flat and tries to rape her. He gets stabbed to death with a knife in the struggle. The girl is seen leaving the flat by a cadger type who recognises her. After the killing the girl wanders the streets all night and then goes home and slips into bed just before the time her mother comes to waken her. She is in a state of complete hysteria, expecting to be arrested at any moment. Meanwhile the police boy friend is investigating the case. He finds the girl's glove at the artist's flat and comes round to her house to question her. The cadger turns up too, and tries to blackmail him. Eventually, the cadger gets accused of the murder and, in a panic, runs away and is killed.

By intelligent use of sound, Hitchcock made this sordid story memorable. The first time he did it was when the girl was wandering in the street after the killing. The last she had seen of the dead man was his hand sticking out from a curtain. So as she wandered the streets she was obsessed with hands. She saw huge hands everywhere: policemen's, paper-sellers', touts'. Suddenly she saw a beggar asleep. His hand lay just as the dead man's hand had done. She opened her mouth to shriek. And the shriek came from the mouth of the artist's landlady finding the body! It's been done again but never so well as this, the first time. Again, when the girl has sneaked home to bed, just before her mother comes in to waken her, the mother fusses with the canary that sings of freedom and happiness while the camera concentrates on the girl, half mad with fear of imprisonment and hanging. And then when she comes down to breakfast, the talk is all of the near-by murder. A gossipy neighbour, full of it, begins to elaborate on the horror of knifing. She harps again and again on the word 'knife'. Gradually the rest of her words become weaker but 'knife' goes on. Soon to the distorted mind of the girl, the neighbour is no longer gossiping. We hear, as the girl hears, the shrill voice repeating horribly, monotonously, "Knife—Knife—Knife." And we grip our seats with the sheer terror of it.

To her every ring of the bell means the police. The bell seems to be always ringing. And every one louder, more ominous. Suddenly, the bell rings again. But this time it rings differently. It is higher, fiercer, more metallic. The sound is forced up until it seems to go through you. It frightens you. And it introduces the blackmailer!

All through the film there occur these imaginative uses of sound. They may be criticised as unreal but in point of fact they are not. Everyone helped to get across to the audience the reality of the girl's terror, the reality of her suspense. Why should sound on the screen always be real? We all know that a door bangs or a clock ticks. But what we should want to hear is how the noises sound to the characters we are seeing. In *Blackmail* you saw an imaginative melodramatic director suddenly given an extra medium to play with. And he accepted it as one would expect, solely to produce extra dramatic effect. With such a beginning we could have hoped that by now imaginative sound in films would have been an accepted fact. But it is not. Almost always any sound that is not the direct complement of the picture is looked on as highbrow and arty. It is sneered at as being vague and obscure. Why? The sound in *Blackmail* didn't obscure. It clarified, every time. How much could be done with modern films overloaded as they are with dialogue, by the use of these early "tricks'," if you like to call them that. But no, the characters must sit around and tell us just how they feel and exactly what they're going to do next. None of Hitchcock's latest films use sound with the same imagination. Why has screen sound become dead? One solution may be that the creative minds have been overwhelmed by the large new body of sound technicians, terribly clever, terribly earnest, and terribly dull. Their one desire seems to be to get sound more and more like the real thing. But no fancy stuff. "A bell is a bell, old boy. Never a gong."


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# WORLD OPINION

## Hollywood and Revolution

IT MIGHT BE WELL to touch upon revolt as it affects Hollywood.

Mr. James Cagney's first picture since his battle with Warner Brothers has appeared, and it is appropriately named *Great Guy*. It is common gossip in movie circles that the industry is out to "break Cagney" not only because he put up a terrific court battle on the salary question, but because he, like President Roosevelt, is what California calls "a red." Now I can speak with some understanding on that question, as a lot of folks have been writing to this magazine lately suggesting that "that communist Levin" be fired.

It is very easy to become a letter-writer's communist. The only people who object to the inclusion of such illustrious folks as Cagney, Levin, and Roosevelt in their ranks seem to be the roll callers of the Communist Party. They, however, are in the minority.

It is common knowledge now that President Roosevelt's campaign was directed and financed from Moscow, and a good job they did of it too. I get my movie reviews in mimeographed form from the same place: they are even so clever as to have English translators over there so I don't have to go to any trouble at all. As to Mr. Cagney, he tipped his hand several years ago when, along with such communists as the judge who sentenced Tom Mooney, he joined in the movement toward getting Mr. Mooney a new trial.

To speak up for Tom Mooney is enough for Hollywood. Shortly afterward Mr. Cagney, who was working on an old contract, demanded a rise. He also wanted to work in fewer and better pictures. It will be recalled that Mr. Cagney has often expressed his desire to appear in such plays as those of Mr. O'Casey. Maybe that proved him a dangerous red, too. Howbeit, Mr. Cagney had to go to court; he won his case, was freed of his contract, but found that there was not much enthusiastic bidding for his services. The moviemakers let each other understand that anyone who could beat them in court was a dangerous red.

There was, however, a new company forming, the Grand National, chiefly interested in producing class B pictures for the double bills. They wanted at least one big name, and they got Cagney. *Great Guy* is his first picture with the new company, and his first picture since "the trouble."

Cagney himself is as good as ever, and in general the film is not bad. All that's wrong is that it lacks the sharp slick expert construction of the more expensive Hollywood products. It simply smacks of a second-rate studio. Mr. Cagney does not deserve this, and his public should be indignant that movie politics has put him into such a position. As to revolution in Hollywood, I understand that a few more daring steps have been made. When I was there last summer, I was invited with great secrecy to a gathering at the home of a high-salaried movie personage. This gathering consisted of Hollywood's *avant garde*—the real bloody revolutionary liberals who were almost ready to go so far as to say that Tom Mooney ought to get a new hearing. The meeting was for the purpose of planning the release of a film in which Tom Mooney speaks in his own defence. I should point out that the newsreels of this country are all controlled by Moscow because the newsreels have shown Tom Mooney pleading for a new hearing.

Well, I had to promise not to tell who was at that gathering as such persons might suffer the fate of other Hollywood reds. I am going to violate my blood-signed oath, however, in one instance. I think the person I am going to name won't suffer because he is his own boss. Charles Chaplin was there. Of course we all know that Mr. Chaplin's last movie, *Modern Times*, was actually a picturisation of the Communist Manifesto; the fact that it grossed over four million dollars and was at the top of the list as the most profitable picture of the year only proves the diabolic cunning of the Moscow propagandists.

Since that time, a few Hollywood celebrities have gone so far as to contribute money openly to the striking Salinas lettuce-pickers, and now I understand that they are going to free Tom Mooney again. I only hope they take warning from such ex-communists as Mr. Cagney and myself, and let innocent people remain in jail.

—Meyer Levin, *Esquire*

## Castles in Spain

WHY NOT A MOVIE of Sean O'Casey's "Within the Gates," directed by John Ford, with Lillian Gish in her original role?

And Shaw's *Candida*, directed by King Vidor, with Katherine Cornell in her original role; Frank Lawton as Marchbanks, and Leslie Howard as Morell.

A new version of *Three Loves* (done once before as a silent film in Germany) from the novel by Max Brod, with Marlene Dietrich in her original role as Stasha, Fritz Kortner, who should be imported for his original role as Dr. Karkos, and Gary Cooper as the third corner of the triangle. To be directed by Josef von Sternberg, of course.

Speaking of Pabst, imagine what a trenchant film the director of *Die Dreigroschenoper* and *Kameradschaft* could make of Andre Malraux' magnificent study of the Chinese revolution, "Man's Fate." . . .

Or a film based on the life of Nijinsky with, perhaps, Paul Muni as Nijinsky, and certainly Charles Laughton as Diaghilev.

And speaking of great personalities, why not a film on the life of Van Gogh (after Irving Stone's book, "Lust for Life") with Peter Lorre playing the mad Dutch genius? Or a film version of Somerset Maugham's "Moon and Sixpence," based on the life of Gauguin, actually filmed in the South Seas, directed by Van Dyck, and starring John Barrymore as Gauguin. And, while we're at it, can you picture Fritz Kortner as Beethoven, Claude Rains as Napoleon, Jean Hersholt as Brahms? These would make splendid biographical films with world-wide appeal! Think of Veidt as Paganini!

—Herman G. Weinberg

## More British than the British

A GOOD IDEA IN the movie industry, like gas, is sure to expand when it is released, and the English influence has now spread to, of all exotic places, England. Since the now legendary *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, there has been a profound renaissance of English home product, and parallel to it a soft-pedalling of potential celluloid nationalism. There was no need for it. It could be handled so capably and enthusiastically by the Americans. But once the Britons discovered with proper amaze that they could make good movies (and they can) it became a certainty that they would plunge into the dignified vortex of their own history. To date we have seen here the sanguinary and highly commendable *Nine Days a Queen*, celebrating the decapitation of Lady Jane Grey, and we are shortly to be afforded a glimpse at *Fire Over England*, an Elizabethan drama that should turn up shortly at the music hall.

*Fire Over England* carries an adventitious interest, aside from its dramaturgical worth, because it is the first historical movie to be made at the Korda studios since the sanctified *Private Life of Henry VIII*.

The Korda adventure carries with it much of the spirit that attaches to the Hollywood product—with a geographical modification. The Korda studios are located in England. But Korda, of course, is a Hungarian. The producer of *Fire Over England* is a German, Erich Pommer; the director is William K. Howard, an American.

You can observe that the strange aptitude (not the inclination: that will always remain a brilliant mystery) of foreigners like Americans and Hungarians for capturing the elusive essence of British tradition in historical movies is anything but strange. Familiarity, to risk a platitude, breeds contempt. The English themselves are a little bit too close to their past to view it with anything like engrossing interest. It is too much a part of their everyday ethos. But foreigners, on the other hand, can back off and take a long view and be attracted, and be moved to want to get an immortal imprimatur on celluloid.

Hence when you see *Fire Over England* you will probably be impressed all over again with the painstaking attention to detail, the fetichising of accuracy. It is principally the story of the defeat of Philip of Spain's swollen Armada by the small but snappy English fleet. In each department of the movie, historic detail is handled with reverence and awe. Elizabeth's nose, carried defiantly by that excellent actress Flora Robson, is precise in size and proportion to the last millimetre. A song that was written by Henry VIII was exhumed for use in the picture. Elizabeth's last minute pep-talk to the soldiery at Tilbury is composed almost entirely of Elizabeth's actual words.

In short, *Fire Over England* sets out to be as utterly British in spirit as it is possible for a non-Britisher to be—that is, more British than you would think it possible to be under any mortal circumstance.

—*New York Sunday Times*

# WORLD OPINION

## The Scottish Idiom

SCOTSMEN WHO HAVE a decent pride in their birthplace must grieve to see their history, their habits, and their clothes travestied by films made by aliens. Yet it would be much worse if these films were made at home. The music hall, gaily encouraged by Scotsmen, has travestied our nation, but never so viciously and savagely as the films have done. I am proud to belong to a clan by direct descent; I am not a sept of anything, nor a Highlander by condescension of the tartan-makers' manuals; but I cannot wear my own tartan now, and partly because the film-makers clothed Ayrshire hips in kilts, in their rendering of Burns's wedding, and clad Bothwell in a kilt to enchant the extraordinary Mary of the recent *Mary Queen of Scots*.

We ourselves have done our best to make ourselves comic objects of derision on the screen. We have popularised and sold a false picture of our country. We have made a comic strip of Scotland.

It is a great pity that we have been so successful in making Scotland a silly object full of romance, glamour, Loch Ness monsters, naked knees and mother love, because Scotland has something to give which Hollywood cannot provide. I do not mean our scenery or romantic episodes in our history. So far as scenery is concerned, the face of Scotland is entirely composed of features, mostly blank. And the romantic episodes in our history are not Scottish but Stuart. Scottish history is not romantic. It is dour, savage, furious, enlivened solely by the lust for freedom which possessed our ancestors, and dignified by a determined callous self-sacrificing political strife. The words of Wallace's uncle to his nephew are more important and significant in Scottish history than Mary Queen of Scots. Henry VIII represented something in England, Mary represented nothing in Scotland. But John Knox did.

Scotland might provide subjects for historical films which would introduce a novel seriousness and fury into the cinema. They might also help to upset the sad theory, on which most films are made, that the camera cannot lie. So that this bleak theory may not be controverted, the cinema clings to lifelikeness; it exaggerates but does not forsake truth and reason as other arts do. Mickey Mouse, the child of the sacred-serious fairy-tale, is not serious but funny, not fantastic but ludicrous. Children laugh at Mickey Mouse, but they do not laugh at the three bears. Scotland is not a country that loves the ludicrous. It hates and scourges the ludicrous with savage wit. The country of the ballads and of the flyting proverbs might provide a corrective for the silliness of modern films which ape reality, and make reality play the buffoon, instead of forgetting reality in the self-contained fantastic serious world of art.

I hope that if we ever have Scottish films they will take our history out of fancy dress: that they will keep the quality which makes our ballads live: in the country where men said—

> Ower his white banes when they are bare
> The wind sall blaw for evermair.

Men in kilts and knights in armour are needless things, an impertinence indeed.

But what is valuable, what is inspiring, what is terrifying in Scotland is the bitter eloquent political life of our country in the past. If that can be portrayed in Scottish films we shall have given something of value to the new art. And perhaps some Scottish producer may remember that all through our history men have been remembered by their words more than by their deeds, and only the unlucky weak have been remembered by their faces. The human voice is the loveliest instrument of music. Its range is widest and most moving in the world. Wallace's speech to his men, Wallace's uncle's words to his nephew, King James's address to his soul, the eloquence of our ballads and the flyting of our proverbs came from a nation which put its soul into its speech. And if the cinema ever finds its soul it will be in words. I hope that they may be Scottish.

—Ian Macpherson, *Glasgow Herald*

## Hitchcock on Stories

WE WANT TO FIND A STORY. We meet and talk. We read the reviews—we have no time to read the whole books. We pore over notices of plays. We discuss every possible type of story—and that brings me to the first prime requisite for a film story.

It must blend two things which seem almost mutually exclusive: it must hang on one single central idea which must never get out of the minds of the audience for one single solitary minute, either consciously or subconsciously; and it must offer scope for the introduction of a number of elements, which you have read about every single picture that has ever been produced: glamour, suspense, romance, charm, drama, emotion, and so forth.

The formula for making a picture is to find a single problem which is sufficiently enthralling to hold the attention of the people who are watching the play unfold, and yet not sufficiently difficult to demand uncomfortable concentration.

The reason murder mysteries are not often great successes on the screen is because they demand too much acute concentration: the audience is keyed up to watching for clues, listening for clues, trying to glean from every line of dialogue some light into the mystery.

The true motion picture formula is to state in the first reel your single central theme which must be a problem. It may be of the simplest: "Boy meets girl; boy falls for girl; boy quarrels with girl; boy and girl come together again."

There the problem is: Will they be reconciled? And the corollaries are: How long before they are reconciled? How will they be reconciled? . . .

The difficulty of writing a motion picture story is to make things not only logical but visual. You have got to be able to see why someone does this, see why someone goes there. It is no use telling people; they have got to SEE. We are making pictures, moving pictures, and though sound helps and is the most valuable advance the films have ever made they still remain primarily a visual art.

There are very few—astonishingly few—people who can write a screen story. There are no chapter-headings; no intervals between the acts. The fading in and fading out are so quick that they do not give the audience time to discuss and work out and think over what they have seen and why they have seen it.

—Alfred Hitchcock, *News Chronicle*

## Television in the U.S.A.

THE ENGINEERS have succeeded in simplifying television receivers by reducing the number of controls from 14 to 10 and the number of tubes from 33 to 26. . . . Also the greenish tint that has characterised television pictures in the majority of past demonstrations has been overcome. The sound part of the television show is already equal to the best broadcast receivers and . . . helps to a great extent in holding the spectator's interest in the pictures, now measuring 7½ by 10 inches.

There can be no doubt that television must eventually offer larger pictures to possess real entertainment value and to lure the eye as do the movies. . . . One head eclipses the screen. Therefore the seats must be arranged stagger fashion if all are to see the performance. And everyone to see clearly should not be more than five feet from the machine.

The big cathode ray tube or "eye" of the receiver . . . measures twelve inches across. It costs about £20 and has a life of about 1,000 hours before burning out. Until this tube can be reduced in price and its period of service lengthened television sets will be expensive, probably between £60 and £120.

Close-ups are by far most interesting on the screen. When the electric camera attempts more than head-to-waist views it loses detail. For example, an entire jazz band is not effective by present television because the players are so far away that they look like so many toothpicks. . . .

So far in television demonstrations showmanship has been sadly missing. . . . The artistic side of television needs showmen and needs them badly. It is most apparent that the scenic designers, make-up experts and all those artisans who go to make the stage and movies what they are have not found their way into television as yet; when they do they will find it necessary to learn many new tricks.

The television actor and speaker is warned that he is most effective when he memorises his lines, otherwise he is continually ducking his head to read the manuscript. And a reporter at a television show must memorise too; the room is darker than a movie theatre because the small television screen sheds little light and the reviewer of the television performance cannot make notes in the dark.

—Orrin E. Dunlap, *N.Y. Sunday Times*

# PEOPLE OF THE STUDIOS

## Denham

As the financial crisis of the British Film Industry came to a head with Gaumont-British revelations, Korda announced his future plans. In doing so he sent the message to his staff: "I hope that all will be glad to hear of these productions after the recent month of quiet time, and that all will do their utmost to guarantee the success of these future productions."

Victor Saville has started work on two pictures: *Action for Slander*, directed by Tim Whelan, and *Bicycle for Two*, the film originally scheduled for René Clair, a technicolour musical under Saville's personal direction. A third subject, *South Riding*, is also ready for shooting.

**Victor Saville**

Merle Oberon's accident last month caused an indefinite postponement of *I, Claudius*, directed by Josef von Sternberg, and it is possible that production will have to be abandoned altogether owing to the expiry of Charles Laughton's contract. Before the hold-up, the call for artists had been altered from the usual 9 o'clock to 8.30 in the morning to allow time for elaborate make-ups. Flora Robson, who played the part of an old and dissolute woman with wrinkled and baggy skin, suffered daily for three hours in the hands of make-up expert Guy Pearce. Agnes de Mille, daughter of William de Mille, the once equally famous director brother of Cecil, had been coaching Miss Oberon for her ballet. Miss de Mille was choreographer with the Ballet Rambert.

* * *

## Gaumont-British

A few days ago "Cease Work" sounded in the six big stages at Shepherd's Bush, and an era in the history of Gaumont-British reached an end. At a cost of £300,000, the Ostrer Brothers built the studios in 1932—90,000 square feet of floor space, restaurant and dressing rooms to hold six hundred, an orchestration theatre, fifteen cutting rooms, sixty-two film vaults, carpenters', plasterers' and modelling shops. All these are to become a printing laboratory, and headquarters for Gaumont-British News. A gigantic laboratory and a gigantic headquarters.

The history of this company dates back to 1895, when Leon Gaumont, a contemporary of Pathé and Lumière, founded a company in Paris to make films with a single portable camera. The English rights of his pictures were held by the Bromhead Brothers in a little office at Cecil Court, Charing Cross Road.

In 1902 Gaumont set up the first English production studio in a corner of Freeman's Cricket Ground, Dulwich, where *Lost a Leg of Mutton* and *Curfew Shall Not Ring To-night* were both produced. Before the beginning of the war, the company had made talking pictures of George Robey and Harry Lauder, by means of a waxed cylinder record, and had made the world's first newsreel.

The first Shepherd's Bush Studios were built in 1915, the Ostrer brothers taking over production in 1931. In 1932 they were rebuilt, and since then they have given us such films as *Rome Express*, *Thirty-Nine Steps*, *I Was a Spy*, *Rhodes of Africa*, *It's Love Again*, *Head over Heels*, *Sabotage*, and *The Great Barrier; King Solomon's Mines* and *Non-Stop New York* are in the cutting room, and *Take My Tip* is ready for exhibition.

Pinewood has taken over and the cameras are turning on *Gangway*, in which Jessie Matthews plays the part of a sob-sister on a London newspaper. The script is by Lesser Samuels, and Sonnie Hale, responsible for *Head Over Heels*, is directing.

At Gainsborough, Gaumont's subsidiary at Islington, production continues. Will Mahoney and Will Fyffe, as an Irish-American adventurer and a Scottish business man respectively, are the stars of *Said O'Reilly to MacNab*, now on the floor under William Beaudine, director of *Windbag the Sailor*. *O-Kay for Sound*, Marcel Varnel's Crazy Gang film, is in the cutting room.

* * *

## Pinewood

Norman Walker, whose *Turn of the Tide*, a film of Yorkshire fisher people, broke away magnificently from studio leg-bound traditions and created great enthusiasm among the critics, may not find a sequel easily forthcoming. Word of mouth publicity brought *Turn of the Tide* fame in unlikely quarters, but at the box-office it did not fully reflect the critics' enthusiasm. Walker's new picture is called *Sunset in Vienna*. Tullio Carminati plays an Italian officer whose marriage to a beautiful Viennese girl (Lilli Palmer) is wrecked by the outbreak of hostilities. Carminati throws everything overboard at the conclusion of the war for a care-free, bohemian life, and drifts down the social scale, ending as a café singer in Port Said. Which seems to prove that there is box-office safety in distance from England.

* * *

Nova Pilbeam—who, though only seventeen, one hesitates to call a child star (in *The Lady of La Paz* she married twice and had a baby)—is to move to Pinewood with Gaumont-British, where Hitchcock is making *A Shilling for Candles*.

A new-comer to the rank of "juveniles" in England is Dilwyn Thomas, fourteen-year-old son of a Rhondda Valley miner. After some voice training he toured Great Britain with the Royal Mastersingers. For the last three years he has won honour at the Eisteddfod at Aberdare. Screen debut in *The Gang Show*, now cutting under Herbert Wilcox at Pinewood.

**Michael Balcon**

## M.G.M.

Ben Goetz, supervisor of the M.G.M. studios in England, has made two additions to his staff, Sidney Gilliatt, who has been associated with Michael Balcon since the opening of Shepherd's Bush studios, has been signed to work both here and in Hollywood. Gilliatt's work for Gaumont-British includes the screen plays of *Rome Express*, *Chu Chin Chow*, and *King of the Damned*, and the original story of *Friday the Thirteenth*.

* * *

Roland Pertwee, the novelist and dramatist, is writing the dialogue of *Rage in Heaven*, which will be one of the first films to go into production. Angus McPhail and S. C. Balcon are preparing the script. Ben Goetz has been in Hollywood for ten days discussing the final details of casting and direction with Louis B. Mayer. Michael Balcon has also made a trip to the States prior to the launching of actual production here.

* * *

## Ealing

Sarah Churchill is playing the lead in *Secretary in Trouble*, a Dorian production which went into production early last month. It is an English version of the German film *Der Herrwohnung*, and the cast cast includes Vic Oliver, Romney Brent, and Margaret Lockwood. Carol Reed, responsible for *Midshipman Easy* (his first film), *Laburnum Grove* and *Talk of the Devil* (see "Review of Reviews"), is directing.

**Josef von Sternberg**

# People of the Studios (continued)

## Teddington

Sir Seymour Hicks, actor and playwright, has now written his own screen story, entitled *Sand in the Sugar*.

* * *

Two other Warner Brothers First National pictures now in production are *Have You Come or Me?* a comedy with Claude Hulbert and Glenda Farrell; and *The Man Who Made Diamonds*, a melodrama directed by Ralph Ince. Max Miller, who came into the limelight with *Educated Evans*, is also to make two films directed by William Beaudine.

* * *

## Irish Free State

*The Miser*, a new Irish film by Thomas Cooper, director of *The Dawn*, has gone into production at the Hibernia Studios, Killarney. Work has also begun on a film of the Irish troubles, to be released about the middle of the year.

* * *

## Australia

Cinesound, Australia's only producing unit, has completed *It Isn't Done*, due for première next Easter, and *Tall Timber* is in the cutting room. *Lovers and Luggers*, a story of the pearl fisheries, will soon begin, and in August work is scheduled on *Gone to the Dogs*, a comedy by George Wallace. Further stories are being prepared to allow for continuous production.

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## Egypt

H. Cramp, a Nazi refugee who formerly worked for Ufa, is chief of Egypt's most modern film studio, built near the Pyramids. Financed by the Bank Misr, the studios claim to be better equipped than any individual studio in Hollywood, being fitted with up-to-the-minute lighting, photographic and sound-reproducing plants. Cramp, assisted by two other Nazi victims, has been scouring Palestine, Syria and Iraq for material, the chief aim of the company being to produce Arabic films for Arabic people.

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## Italy

Following Italy's colonial enterprise, Africa is now the leading feature in Italian films. *Scipio the African* is now in production, and recently two aeroplanes and four banana freighters set out to Italian Somaliland to make *Marrabo*, to be directed by Romolo Marcellini and produced by Gono-Romo. The script is by Marcella Orana, an authority on the customs, languages and costumes of Somaliland.

## Germany

At the Ufa studios Willy Fritsch and Lilian Harvey are working on *Sieben Ohrfeigen* ("Soundly Spanked"). The script is by B. E. Lüthge and Paul Martin, who is also directing. Music by Peter Kreuder.

Miss Harvey was born in London, and has appeared in British, French and Swedish pictures, but is now under contract to Ufa. Herr Fritsch has acted in Germany, his home country, ever since he decided to give up engineering for the stage, and is one of Ufa's highest paid stars.

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At the end of February production began in the Tobis studios on *Die Ganz Grossen Torheiten*, starring Paula Wessely and Rudolf Forster and directed by Carl Froelich, the first German director to be awarded the title of Professor.

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Both Hollywood and England suffered a loss last month by the deaths of two old hands at character parts—Sir Guy Standing and Frank Vosper.

Standing, who was 64 last September, made his stage debut at the Criterion Theatre, London, in 1889, and signed his first film contract with Zukor in 1914. He was released from this, however, at the outbreak of the War, and was knighted in England in 1919. His most famous rôle was probably Colonel Stone in *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*. He had recently signed a contract with Paramount to play the lead in a colour version of *Beau Geste*.

Frank Vosper will be remembered particularly for his parts in *Jew Süss*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *Heart's Desire* and *The Secret of Stamboul*. He had been on the stage for some years before coming to the screen, making his debut in 1919 at Mile End, and a year later appearing in the West End. He has since written, produced, and acted in many successful plays.

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On the Continent, as well as in Hollywood, best-sellers and big names in the literary world are playing a large part in 1937 film production. In France novels of Tolstoi and Oscar Wilde are finding their way on to the screen. Marcel L'Herbier is adapting Tolstoi's *The Living Corpse* for Pathé, re-titling it *La Nuit de Feu;* and Jean Choux is at work on Wilde's *Une Femme Sans Importance*, scripted by Charles Spaak. In Italy, *I Fratelli Castiglioni*, comedy by Alberto Colantuoni, which has been translated into six languages and won considerable success in Europe, is to be filmed under the direction of Corrada D'Errico. Tobis, in Germany, has *Man Spricht Uber Jacqueline* ("Gossip about Jacqueline") in the cutting room, taken from the novel by Katrin Holland and directed by Werner Hochbaum.

## France

The French Government, following in the tracks of our Moyne Committee, is out to investigate all problems of film production that have arisen in the country. Headed by Jean-Michel Renaitour, and composed of more than two hundred deputies, it is hoping to interview all the important personalities of the industry, visit the principal studios, and aid the producers. Renaitour denies that the ultimate aim of the investigation is to create a state-controlled industry. "But we do want," he says, "to help an industry which employs thousands of persons and invests enormous amounts of capital each year."

Meanwhile, the Government continues its production plans for *La Marseillaise*, film of the French Revolution to be made by Jean Renoir, who was recently awarded the Legion of Honour.

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A documentary film of the Pasteur Institute is being made in Paris. J. Chausey has been given a free hand by Doctor Martin, director of the Institute, so that he can present a truthful account of its accomplishments.

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It seems that Eric von Stroheim is staying away from Hollywood. *Marthe Richard* completed, Renoir has engaged him to play in *La Grande Illusion*, a rôle in which Louis Jouvet was originally cast. The plot, by Renoir and Charles Spaak, centres round the experiences of a prisoner of war. Stroheim has also made a tentative promise to direct the as yet unscripted *Tzigane* ("Gipsy").

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## Hollywood

Scripts for biographical films on three classical composers are being prepared in Hollywood. Columbia is making *Chopin*, with Francis Lederer in the title rôle; Warner Brothers has scheduled *Beethoven* with Paul Muni, and M.G.M. promises *Johann Strauss*.

* * *

William Wyler, director of Sam Goldwyn's *Dodsworth* and co-director of *Come and Get It*, has been selected by Goldwyn to direct Sidney Kingsley's play *Dead End*, a study of gangster life, adapted for the screen by Lillian Hellman, author of "The Children's Hour" (Film: *These Three*). Humphrey Bogart, screen villain, plays "Baby Face Martin."

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*Forty-Second Street* having proved itself good box-office, Walter Wanger now plans to introduce us to Fifty-Second Street, headquarters of New York's night clubs. Gene Towne and Graham Baker are writing the screen play.

Wanger, formerly under contract to Paramount, but now working for United Artists as unit producer, has produced *Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, *Private Worlds*, and *The Moon is Our Home*. At present he is supervising *You Only Live Once* and *History is Made at Night*. His next job is *The River is Blue* (formerly called *Castles in Spain*), written by Clifford Odets, directed by Lewis Milestone, and starring Madeleine Carroll.

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John Hoffman, writer and director of the earthquake sequences in *San Francisco*, has been signed by David O. Selznick to produce special dramatic transitions for Selznick International's technicolour production, *A Star is Born*. He also did the montage scenes in *The Great Ziegfeld*.

# LIST OF BOOKINGS TO MATURE ON "MARCH OF TIME" SECOND YEAR

*For its second year "MARCH OF TIME" has arranged contracts for showing in more than 1200 Cinemas. Below is a selection from a list that covers the British Isles and Irish Free State.*

| CINEMA. | PLACE. |
|---|---|
| Forum ... | Southampton. |
| Futurist ... | Birmingham. |
| Plaza ... | Regent Street. |
| Paramount ... | Tottenham Court Rd. |
| Capitol ... | Cardiff. |
| Westover ... | Bournemouth. |
| Kings ... | Bristol. |
| Paramount ... | Manchester. |
| Whiteladies | Bristol. |
| Paramount ... | Liverpool. |
| Regal ... | Torquay. |
| Paramount ... | Leeds. |
| Paramount ... | Newcastle. |
| Paramount ... | Glasgow. |
| Savoy ... | Brighton. |
| Astoria ... | Cliftonville. |
| Granada ... | Dover. |
| Central or Playhouse | Folkestone. |
| Rivoli ... | Southend. |
| Regent ... | Gt. Yarmouth. |
| Marina ... | Lowestoft. |
| Majestic or Ritz | Oxford. |
| Super Electra, Palace | Oxford. |
| Olympia ... | Newport, Mon. |
| Castle ... | Merthyr. |
| Beau Nash ... | Bath. |
| Pavilion ... | Ramsgate. |
| Silver Cinema | Worcester. |
| Theatre Royal | Preston |
| Synod Hall | Edinburgh. |
| Palace Grand or Winter Gdn. | Blackpool. |
| Capitol ... | Dublin. |
| Grafton ... | Dublin. |
| Odeon ... | South Harrow. |
| Empire ... | Mile End. |
| Empress ... | Hackney. |
| Commodore | Hammersmith. |
| Forum ... | Fulham Road. |
| Forum ... | Ealing. |
| Dominion ... | Southall. |
| Embassy ... | Harrow. |
| Carlton ... | Winchmore Hill. |
| Ritz ... | Bowes Park. |
| Cameo ... | Bear Street. |
| Alma or Empire | Luton. |
| Bruce Grove | Tottenham. |
| Coliseum ... | Harrow. |
| Tatler ... | Charing Cross Road. |
| Tussauds ... | Baker Street. |
| Lido ... | Golders Green. |
| Ritz ... | Edgware. |
| South Cinema | Hackney. |
| Hippodrome | Willesden. |
| Ritz ... | Neasden. |
| Olympia ... | Shoreditch. |
| Palaceum ... | Commercial Road. |
| Rialto, Plaza or Ritz | Maidenhead. |
| Hippodrome | Poplar. |
| Rex ... ... | Stratford. |
| Carlton ... | Upton Park. |
| Palace ... | Kensal Rise. |
| Coronation | Manor Park. |
| Capitol ... | Barking. |
| Princess ... | Dagenham. |
| Blue Hall ... | Edgware Road. |
| Dominion ... | Walthamstow. |
| Queens ... | Bayswater. |
| Regal ... | Uxbridge. |
| Majestic ... | Woodford. |
| Ritz ... | Harringay. |
| Savoy ... | Acton. |
| Savoy ... | Enfield. |
| Curzon ... | Mayfair. |
| Tatler ... | Liverpool. |
| Kings ... | Liverpool. |
| Princes ... | Liverpool. |
| Empire ... | Chatham. |
| Ritz Central or Palace | Maidstone. |
| Pavilion ... | Cork |
| Grand Central | Dublin. |
| Majestic, Regal Super or Plaza | Gravesend. |
| Victoria ... | Cambridge. |
| Hippodrome | Rotherhithe. |
| Palace ... | Camberwell. |
| Playhouse ... | Balham. |
| Mayfair ... | Tooting. |
| Majestic ... | Mitcham. |
| Savoy ... | Croydon. |
| Hippodrome | Croydon. |
| Regal ... | Purley. |
| Majestic or St. James | Kings Lynn. |
| Savoy ... | Wandsworth |
| Prince of Wales | Lewisham. |
| Capitol ... | Forest Hill. |
| Capitol ... | Blackheath. |
| Theatre ... | Elephant & Castle. |
| Hippodrome | Putney. |
| Savoy ... | Teddington. |
| Trocadero ... | Southport. |
| Wembley Hall Cinema. | Wembley. |
| Odeon ... | Wimbledon. |
| Odeon ... | Barnet. |
| Hippodrome or Empire | Greenwich. |
| Odeon ... | Haverstock Hill. |
| State & Rialto | Dartford. |
| Odeon ... | Finchley. |
| Dominion ... | Hounslow. |
| Cranstons ... | Glasgow. |
| Hippodrome | Belfast. |
| Odeon ... | Derby. |
| Palace ... | Leicester. |
| Theatre Royal | Bradford. |
| Pioneer ... | Dewsbury. |
| Theatre Royal | Halifax. |
| Hippodrome | Sheffield. |
| Princes ... | Portsmouth. |
| Tivoli or Troxy | Portsmouth. |
| Cinema ... | Aberdare. |
| Radio Centre | East Grinstead. |
| Exchange ... | Lincoln. |
| Regal ... | Watford. |
| Odeon ... | Chingford. |
| Ritz ... | Doncaster. |
| Dorchester. | Hull. |
| Majestic ... | West Hartlepool. |
| Elite ... | Middlesbrough. |

## People of the Studios (*contd.*)

### Hollywood

New idea in Hollywood is to have a singing stand-in—for if the star's time and energy can be saved for action rehearsals, why not for singing as well? After being introduced by Grace Moore, and later adopted by Lily Pons and other singing stars, Robert Riskin went further and used a talking stand-in for his film *When You're in Love*.

* * *

The primary reason for Grace Moore's forthcoming visit to England and the Continent is a somewhat unusual one. Her pictures are made on a percentage basis, and as certain countries—such as Germany and Italy—prohibit the export of money, her only course is to spend it there. Miss Moore has no objection to occasional holidays abroad. She comes to England first.

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Trouble has recently been brewing in the States owing to the unauthorized use of film gags and comedy bits on the air. M.G.M. began the feud between radio and screen when material from the Marx Brothers' *A Day at the Races* was broadcast, and several sequences had to be re-shot. Other studios discovered that their wisecracks had been finding their way into radio programmes, and combined together to investigate where the leakage occurred.

* * *

With the engagement of Douglas Fairbanks, Jr. and Raymond Massey for two big rôles in Anthony Hope's *The Prisoner of Zenda*, the cast is now complete. Other players are Ronald Colman, Madeleine Carroll, Mary Astor and David Niven. Fairbanks, having just finished *When Thief Meets Thief* for Criterion Films, plays Rupert of Hentzau, and Massey takes the part of "Black Michael." It is the first American contract that either of these actors have accepted for some time; and after completing the job, Massey takes a play on Broadway and Fairbanks returns to England to make a film of the Scottish Border.

### Infant Dept.

Stars may come and stars may go, but Shirley Temple films appear with phenomenal regularity. At the moment Miss Temple, who celebrated her eighth birthday last month, is working full pressure on *Wee Willie Winkie*, opposite he-man Victor McLaglen. The story is by Kipling.

There appears to be no lack of stories for child stars in London or Hollywood. Bonita Granville, villain child in *These Three* and *Maid of Salem*, has received a long term contract from Warners. Her first film is to be *The Story of Emil Zola*, followed by *The Love Derby*, with Leslie Howard and Olivia de Haviland. Freddie Bartholomew had no sooner finished his *Lloyds of London* for 20th Century-Fox than M.G.M. demanded him back for *Captain Courageous*, in which he co-stars for the second time with Mickey Rooney. Over at Beaconsfield, Hughie Green, Britain's seventeen-year-old star of radio, stage and screen, has signed a long-term contract with British Lion. His first film will be *Melody and Romance*, an original story played against a background of the B.B.C., Music Halls, and Hyde Park. Renée Houston is the leading lady, and Maurice Elvey the director. Dialogue by radio-playwright L. du Garde Peach.

# MEETINGS AND ACQUAINTANCES

Kenneth Nyman

The election of **KENNETH NYMAN** to the vice-presidency of the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association represents a real victory for the progressive elements in that body. In his late thirties, dry and unemotional, Nyman is the most able spokesman for the independent exhibitor. Past chairman of the London and Home Counties branch of the C.E.A. and an ex-teacher of science he brings an academic balance to the discussion of trade politics. His most valuable contribution has been on the subject of "overbuilding." It is safe to say that had he not raised his voice on the matter, the vital problem of the increasing domination of the circuits would never have figured in the discussions of the C.E.A. The C.E.A. has long been noted for its ability to take no positive line and it is only through the individual efforts of men like Nyman that matters of vital concern to exhibitors have been raised and ventilated. His long-sighted views have often made him the subject of bitter personal attacks from the old-fashioned members of the trade, but time and again he has been proved correct in his line. A classic example arose out of his continued advocacy of a statistical bureau which was viciously opposed and stifled on the grounds that it was not in the best interests of the exhibitor to reveal facts about his trade. The joker came when the C.E.A. had to present a case to the Lord Moyne Committee on Quota and failed to prove vital facts of its case through lack of statistics. Nyman contributed a notable paper to the recent conference on children's films and apart from trade activities has done much to encourage people engaged in the cultural and educational side of films. Here's hoping in his new capacity he will be able to wipe some of the cobwebs off the Exhibitors' Association.

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**GUNTHER VON STAPENHORST,** until lately one of the leading Ufa producers under the Nazi régime and associate-producer of Britain's imperialist film epic, *The Great Barrier*, proposes to set up his own production unit in this country. Stapenhorst gained international recognition for his production of the anti-Russian propaganda film *Refugees*.

The industry has taken great pleasure in the apparent collapse of German film making under Hitler, but, as ever, can provide facilities for any Continental personality with a ready-made reputation. It will be interesting to see the exact results of Stapenhorst's work in this country. Is it possible that he will instil into his films an element of Anglo-German "understanding"?

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Writing the script of *Action for Slander*, Saville's next picture, is **MILES MALLESON.** He is both an excellent actor and a brilliant writer. In the latter field he has recently distinguished himself with his *Six Men of Dorset*, a play dealing with the Tolpuddle Martyrs, which is being toured around the provinces prior to London production. Mr. Malleson is also to write the script of *Victoria* for Wilcox, starring Anna Neagle. The romance of the Queen and the Prince Consort can, he thinks, provide an excellent film-subject.

While attending to his play and his scripts, he was suddenly asked to play a part in *Knight without Armour*. Feyder directed him in the rôle of a villainous Bolshevist Commissar—an experience which he found stimulating. Looking however closely at Mr. Malleson, I failed to discover a trace of the blackguardly bolshevist, or even of the restless author.

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**SIR JOHN PAKENHAM,** nearing eighty and a representative of the City of London, spoke at a recent London Cinema Luncheon Club meeting. This greying, dignified solicitor revealed to several hundred leading exhibitors that fifty years ago he was associated with Hale's Tours, the forerunner of the modern movie theatre and English counterpart of the "nickelodeon." They ran very early pictures like *The Great Train Robbery* and thrilled pre-war London with scenes of railway trains arriving at stations. They ran the first cinema in the City of London—a tradition that is carried on by the G.P.O. in Newgate Street. It was a surprise to hear this eminent pillar of the City talk of the early days, and there were very few exhibitors present who could recall them. "Jimmy" Bryson must have been one of Sir John's associates, but unfortunately he didn't enlarge on his memories.

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**CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD** is on a short visit to England to supervise production on *The Ascent of F6*, written by himself and W. H. Auden.

Short and dark, with a large nose, Isherwood looks twenty-two, is actually in his thirties. In addition to his collaboration with Auden on new forms of drama, Isherwood is a novelist and wrote that scandalously brilliant study "Mr. Norris Changes Trains." He is at present completing a book which will be largely autobiographical.

He seldom visits England, preferring a nomadic continental life with settled periods in Belgium, France and Portugal. In pre-Nazi days he lived continuously in Germany.

# REVIEW OF REVIEWS

Edited by H. E. Blyth

**TALK OF THE DEVIL.** (Carol Reed—British and Dominion.)
Ricardo Cortez, Sally Eilers, Basil Sidney, Randle Ayrton.

*Talk of the Devil* is a small picture as pictures go; not very expensive, not at all elaborate, with few sets, few players, no very big names in the cast. It is melodrama; big business melodrama with forgery and two suicides and attempted murder, and a hole in the floor to shoot the victim's body down into the river; real old Edgar Wallace stuff, with a dash of Lyceum, and the neatest thing in villainy by proxy since the late lamented *Frankenstein*. Apart from minor cavils, I got more pleasure out of *Talk of the Devil*, a richer sense of promise and fecundity, than out of any English melodrama since Hitchcock first made *The Lodger*. One can use all the adjectives in the dictionary about a film, describe it this way and that way, assess its direction and its writing and its acting and its presentation, but in the end there is only one question that matters—is it a dead picture or a live picture? Mr. Reed's is a live picture, and it is with the hope that he may give us many more live pictures in the future that I temper my congratulations to-day.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

One still hears the plaintive twittering of people who imagine that the British film industry is, artistically, a broken reed. Pull out your trumpet-stop on the mighty Wurlitzer! Darken the cinema! Spotlight on Carol Reed—unbroken, unbending—Britain's most portentous director since Hitchcock loomed exceptionally large over the horizon. *Talk of the Devil* has a nobility of central theme: it honours the Tynesiders who build ships. It is also a thriller—and a livid, baleful, malevolent thriller at that. It is also a love-story—and a tender, delicate, exquisitely witty love-story into the bargain. The story tells how John Findlay, head of a ship-building company, secretly secures the contract to build a new Atlantic liner that will bring back prosperity and employment to his men; how the secret leaks out, and the contract is cancelled; how John, disgraced, resigns from his company and commits suicide; how his adopted daughter and a young American force confession from the real culprit, clear the old man's name and avenge his suffering.

—Paul Dehn, *The Sunday Referee*

*Critical Summary.*

**TALK OF THE DEVIL.** Astute critics long ago realised that Carol Reed was an English director to be watched. Early promise shown in his handling of *Midshipman Easy* bore fruit in the more ambitious *Laburnum Grove*. Now *Talk of the Devil* is generally acclaimed as a genuine thriller, excellently directed and showing marked originality. The trade also welcomes what is clearly first-rate entertainment.

**THE WORM TURNS.** (Walt Disney.)

The plot of *The Worm Turns* is peculiarly satisfying and sympathetic, for Mickey has invented a monstrous drug which gives invincible courage to those who take it, so that the fly routs the spider, the mouse the cat, the cat the dog, and the dog the man. The whole is as fast as any of Mr. Disney's works, and each animal when it takes the drug subtly combines its natural character with all the gestures of the bruiser.

—*The Times*

"We from Kronstadt"

## Review of the Month

**WE FROM KRONSTADT.**

From the moment when the elderly commissar with a sad and unprofessional face, dressed in a shabby mackintosh and a soft hat which has known better days, takes his seat in the naval motor-boat which chugs softly out in the last evening light, under the bridges of Petrograd towards the lamps of the naval port, *We from Kronstadt* takes a firm hold on the imagination.

This story of 1919, the year of foreign intervention, up to the last shot of Balashov, the marine, standing on the cliff where his companions had been flung to death, shaking his fist towards the sea —"And now does anybody else want Petrograd?"—this very simple story of rivalry between the marines and the workers' battalions is in the tradition of boys' stories, full of last charges and fights to the death, heroic sacrifices and narrow escapes, all superbly directed: the single soldier crawling, grenade in hand, towards the monstrous tank which has terrified the marines; the ragged band in the last trench between the enemy and the capital striking up the cheerful rallying tune which calls the wounded from the dressing station to stagger back into a last desperate action; the voice whispering "Kronstadt, Kronstadt, Kronstadt" into the dumb phone as the camera tracks along the wire, the birds peacefully preening, to the ragged ends, the fallen post, and silence.

But magnificently as all this is done, what makes the picture remarkable is less the heroics than the lyrical, the poetic, the critical sense. This is what the poetic cinema should mean: not plays by Shakespeare adapted to a medium even less suitable than the modern stage; but poetry expressed in images, which let in a little more of common life than is in the story.

There are many examples of the poetic use of imagery and incident: the gulls sweeping and coursing above the cliffs where the Red prisoners are lined up for their death by drowning, the camera moving from the heavy rocks around their necks to the movement of the light white wings: one sooty tree drooping on the huge rocky Kronstadt walls above a bench where a sailor and a woman embrace; against the dark tide, the riding lights of the battleships, the shape of the great guns, the singing of a band of sailors going home in the dark to their iron home. Life as it is: life as it ought to be: Tchekov's definition of a novelist's purpose comes to mind. Every poetic image is chosen for its contrasting value, to represent peace and normal human values under the heroics and the war-time patriotism.

—Graham Greene, *The Spectator*

## W.F.N. SELECTION

| | |
|---|---|
| *The Good Earth* | (stars reserved) |
| *Theodora Goes Wild* | * * |
| *We from Kronstadt* | * * |
| *Fire over England* | * |
| *Talk of the Devil* | * |
| *Maid of Salem* | * |
| *After the Thin Man* | * |

## OTHER FILMS COVERED IN THIS ISSUE

*Head over Heels*

*Champagne Waltz*

*Pluck of the Irish*

*Song of the Road*

*The Worm Turns*

*The Eternal Mask*

**THE GOOD EARTH.** (Sidney Franklin—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
Paul Muni, Luise Rainer.

A vast and rich film has been made of Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth*. This "success" story of a Chinese farmer is not unlike the American classic story of poverty, toil, and eventual reward. The formal plot is outlined, though, with continual activity, with variety, and often with scenes of a great deal of beauty. It is a further indication of the skill in the general handling, for which Director Sidney Franklin must chiefly be thanked, that alien thoughts, superstitions, and customs are made so lucid. How correct these are I cannot say, but they have the style of authority, at least, and their presentation adds enormously to the charm of the picture. Naturally, the acting itself has much to do with the film's success; and it is the acting of Luise Rainer as O-Lan that is outstanding. That she hardly speaks throughout the performance, or makes a gesture, only serves to stress the fact that she actually dominates the film. She manages to seem more alive than whole mobs. The minor characters, down to the last Chinese infant, all help you think this may be the true North China. Altogether, *The Good Earth* gives us the China of famine, war, harvest, and, too, the China behind the screens.

—John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

Once again Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer has enriched the screen with a superb translation of a literary classic. Its film of Pearl Buck's *The Good Earth* is one of the finest things Hollywood has done this season or any other. The picture has an easy rhythm, graciously suited to Miss Buck's chronicle of the founding of the House of Wang Lung. If its pace is leisurely, it has the valid excuse of dealing with a quiet theme. If it lingers upon details, it is because they richly deserve attention. It is the commonplaces in the life of Wang Lung and O-Lan, his wife, rather than the high points, that fascinate us. Miss Buck's theme, of course, was the peasant's love for the land. It was that simple, unquestioning earth-worship which was the talisman of Wang the farmer. *The Good Earth* was the story of Wang's devotion to the land and the tragedy that threatened to overwhelm him when he neglected it, and the picture has chosen the best of Miss Buck's sequences. It invents a new climax, a terrifying locust plague which has been brilliantly photographed and provides a dramatic finale to a dramatic film. The picture does full justice to the novel, and that is the highest praise one can give it.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

*Critical Summary.*

**THE GOOD EARTH.** American critics unanimously accept this picture as one of the best, perhaps the best, of the late Irving Thalberg's productions. In the trade Muni probably does not rank as high as M.G.M.'s other more glamorous stars, and Luise Rainer is still something of an unknown quantity, but it should be noted that these two are the winners of the Academy awards for 1936. A considerable box-office success seems certain.

**FIRE OVER ENGLAND.** (William K. Howard—London Films.)
Laurence Olivier, Flora Robson, Leslie Banks, Vivien Leigh, Raymond Massey.

This is a superb film. It has excitement, humour and dignity. Better dialogue has never been spoken on the screen. The great Armada, it is true, rather looked like a battle between walnut-shells in a bath, and Sir Francis Drake was presumably too busy playing bowls to put in an appearance throughout the entire film; but everything else was magnificent. I think the painting of Queen Elizabeth has been too faithfully copied; art and actuality need not be bedmates. Flora Robson showed Elizabeth as an avaricious, jealous, malevolent woman; yet one pitied her, and admired her for the fire of patriotism that burnt within her. She had courage, and if she demanded service she was herself the servant of her country. Apart from its historical background, the story is an exciting one. This is a film to see, and see again; and to remember for years. —Harris Deans, *The Sunday Graphic*

There is no lack of incident in A. E. W. Mason's story, but the flowers of narrative are almost throttled by gross weeds of irrelevant detail. *Fire over England* is not a character study of Queen Elizabeth. These laborious pictures of her idiosyncrasies side-track us from the main business of the plot. Though the verdict is unfavourable, it is necessary to add a recommendation to mercy. For when the story of *Fire over England* takes control over the actors we are treated to vigorous and spectacular action in the manner of the early Douglas Fairbanks films. The escapes, the duels and sea-battles are well done. *Fire over England* has the virtues and defects of *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. In that Korda production, too, a foolproof story almost met its match, but nevertheless survived by native strength the blows of irrelevancy. Efforts to gild the lily have nearly killed *Fire over England*, but after each long period of unconsciousness it comes magnificently to life again. —*Truth*

*Critical Summary.*

**FIRE OVER ENGLAND.** A mixed reception from the critics, all of whom praised the spirit in which the film was conceived but not all of whom were satisfied with the final treatment. We may doubt the wisdom of so many English costume films, but in the trade, where hope springs eternal, prosperity and another *Private Life of Henry VIII* are just around the corner.

**"The Good Earth"**

# Review of Reviews (continued)

Myrna Loy in "After the Thin Man"

**AFTER THE THIN MAN.** (W. S. Van Dyke—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
William Powell, Myrna Loy, Joseph Calleia, Elissa Landi, James Stewart.

As few people ever write or make pictures with any deep regard for their work, it is even rarer to find a warm, gay and charming movie than it is to discover plays of that nature; there is so much money, so much exaggerated excitement, so many little heroes connected with motion picture production; it is more often by accident than by design that you run across a spontaneous bit of writing or acting in a movie. *The Thin Man* was that rare exception, a spontaneous movie made by design, and the producers were taking a chance when they attempted to make a sequel. Thus I am happy to report that, while it will not be as fresh as the original Dashiell Hammett production, *After the Thin Man* is a very successful sequel. The picture opens very slowly and more or less seeks to introduce again the idyllic married life of Mr. and Mrs. Nick Charles and their wire-hair, Asta. However, the sets, the photography and the staging in these first few scenes are superb, if overdone. Then one of Mr. Hammett's charming characters, a blackmailing ne'er do well, is murdered, and Mr. Powell and Miss Loy are off to the races again. As is true of practically everything Mr. Hammett writes, the plot is perfectly cock-eyed: as it is true also, it doesn't make any difference because his characters are so brilliantly and gaily drawn. —Pare Lorentz, *McCall's*

Nobody will be quite as happy about *After the Thin Man* as we all were about *The Thin Man*. Nick and Nora are back with us again, and again played by William Powell and Myrna Loy. W. S. Van Dyke has directed it, and everything should have been just fine, but something of the old bloom is gone. Not that as pictures go in this great world this is a dud film. Only in comparison with its predecessor does it disappoint you. There's plenty of shooting, and there's so much "mystery" that I finally lost track of things altogether and didn't know what had happened, or why people went on the way they did. I didn't guess the solution of the mystery, either.

—John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

*Critical Summary.*

**AFTER THE THIN MAN.** Precisely. It should have been before to merit its just reward.

**THEODORA GOES WILD.** (Richard Boleslawski—Columbia.)
Irene Dunne, Melvyn Douglas.

The story is adroitly told. It is a satirical comment upon the petty-mindedness of a small town community. We have all the smug respectability, the scandal-mongering, the humorous situations of this atmosphere. We listen to bright and sparkling dialogue with an appreciable sprinkling of sentiment. Dramatic purpose informs the whole. And if you have the slightest feeling of disappointment, it will not be because of Irene Dunne. We see her as the equal of any of our screen comediennes. Observe the skill with which she handles the complexities, the varied expressions, the individuality of her character. This is a grand piece of acting. Such consummate artistry is as uncommon as it is disturbing.

—Sydney W. Carroll, *The Sunday Times*

Miss Irene Dunne will be remembered for many patient, womanly and rather smug performances (*Roberta* and *Magnificent Obsession* are the worst cases on record); now she has been re-groomed and appears as one of the best comediennes on the screen in the best light comedy since *Mr. Deeds*.

—Graham Greene, *The Spectator*

*Critical Summary.*

**THEODORA GOES WILD.** General satisfaction expressed that Irene Dunne has reversed the normal mental process of the Hollywood star, who plays slick modern comedy parts admirably but yearns for heavy dramatic rôles, and has brilliantly turned from suffering to farce. Menjou has also done it with marked success. Peter Lorre might follow suit.

**PLUCK OF THE IRISH.** (John G. Blystone—Grand National. Titled *Great Guy* in America.)
James Cagney, Mae Clarke, Edward Brophy.

Mr. James Cagney's first picture since his battle with Warner Brothers has appeared. It is common gossip in movie circles that the industry is out to "break Cagney," not only because he put up a terrific court battle on his salary question, but because he, like President Roosevelt, is what California calls "a red." Mr. Cagney tipped his hand several years ago when, along with such communists as the judge who sentenced Tom Mooney, he joined in the movement toward getting Mr. Mooney a new trial. To speak up for Tom Mooney is enough for Hollywood. The movie-makers let each other understand that anyone who could beat them in court was a dangerous red. *Pluck of the Irish* is Cagney's first picture with the new company, and his first picture since "the trouble." In theme, *Pluck of the Irish* is worthy and even a little more honest than the run of racketeer-exposure films. Cagney himself is as good as ever, and in general the film is not bad. It simply smacks of a second-rate studio. Mr. Cagney does not deserve this, and his public should be indignant that movie politics has put him into such a position. —Meyer Levin, *Esquire*

Cagney's rôle is that of an inspector of weights and measures, who finds the scales of justice faked as well as those of the grocer. His girl is secretary to one of the town's most eminent and respected crooks; but that doesn't make any difference. I still say that gangster stories, especially when they are as polite as this one, are refreshing and highly moral. James refusing to be bribed is a fine, uplifting sight; his defiance of a corrupt municipality is heartening; and his willingness to take the gloves off on occasion is exciting. One of these days we may see on the screen an American town honestly run; but this would probably be terribly dull.

—P. L. Mannock, *The Daily Herald*

**SONG OF THE ROAD.** (John Baxter—U.K. Films.)
Bransby Williams, Tod Slaughter, Davy Burnaby, Percy Parsons, Peggy Novak.

This is a leisurely, spacious and quietly appealing film "all along of an old grey mare." The mare is Polly, turned off London's streets to make way for progress, to whom Bill, her driver, is bound by ties he cannot sunder. So he sinks his savings in her at the auction sale, takes her with the harness that his pals present as a parting gift, and seeks a happy-go-lucky destiny in the Sussex Downs. There is a meeting with a tinker who has the spirit of Borrow's Petulengro, an interlude with the show business which is uncommonly authentic in atmosphere, and a sojourn in a farm where man and horse are literally and figuratively in clover for a time. There is something wrong with exhibitors' mentality if this film does not book well. It is one to see yourself, and one to take the children to see, a human film, and not a bit smart. Clean, fresh gusts of laughter blow through it, straight from the English countryside —whence laughter and the joy of living still proceed, even though, as Bill and Polly discover, they are now making munitions there.

—*Birmingham Mail*

# Review of Reviews (continued)

**CHAMPAGNE WALTZ.** (A. Edward Sutherland—Paramount.)
Gladys Swarthout, Fred MacMurray, Jack Oakie.

Paramount's jubilee number is a bright, brittle trifle, with a dash of nearly everything in the light entertainment line. Its basic idea is the same as that of Disney's *Music-Land*, where, you will remember, it was love that built a bridge of harmony between the Isle of Jazz and the Isle of Symphony. It is not quite symphony here, only sentimental Strauss, with a dash of Saint-Saens, but the whole thing is handled so as to please both those who like their music sweet and those who like it hot, and there is just enough satirical camera comment to get either lot by with foes as well as friends. The tale opens in Vienna, where two descendants of the Strauss family, a girl and her grandfather, kept the old tradition alive in their Waltz Palace. In the end we find the Strausses playing in New York in a Ziegfeld setting that is a thousand times more vulgar than all the honest-to-goodness jazz they had spurned in Vienna.

—Frank Evans, *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*

Jazz band versus Strauss waltzers. The final scene, in which the two bands literally merge, is the funniest piece of Hollywood's unconscious self-satire ever filmed.

—Meyer Levin, *Esquire*

**THE ETERNAL MASK.** (Werner Hochbaum—Swiss.)
Peter Petersen, Mathias Wieman, Olga Chechova, Tom Kraa.

It is so seldom that the cinema casts aside its romantic clichés for its proper mantle as an individual art form that this Swiss picture catches us with our guard down and our critical vocabulary rusted. Ordinary superlatives would be ridiculous, comparisons are impossible and that invidious epithet "unique" would not do justice to the occasion. *The Eternal Mask* is a case history of psychosis. It is the story of Dr. Dumartin, member of the staff of a Basle hospital, who administers his experimental meningitis serum to a hopeless case in defiance of the hospital superintendent's order and loses his mind when the patient dies. Excoriated by the widow and unable to bear the accusing glances of his colleagues, the nurses and the other patients, he attempts suicide. Rescued, he loses all sense of his own identity, but is obsessed with the idea of finding Dumartin who—he fancies—is being held prisoner somewhere below, to warn him against murdering others with his serum. Thereafter the film is a record of the dream-world meanderings of a disordered brain while the hospital's staff seeks the key to Dumartin's subconscious mind. Those responsible have collaborated perfectly in fusing the real and the unreal elements of the drama into a coherent and completely engrossing motion picture; the modern score, played by the Vienna Philharmonic Society, is the most eloquent accompaniment imaginable, and the performances are uniformly admirable.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

**MAID OF SALEM.** (Frank Lloyd—Paramount.)
Claudette Colbert, Fred MacMurray, Bonita Granville, Gale Sondergaad.

The little Puritan community, with its house-raisings, its church services with the women carefully segregated from the men lest lustful thoughts should be engendered by propinquity, its bans on dancing and whistling, and even laughing, has been re-created on the screen in all its bleak bigotry but without perceptible exaggeration; and the way the blood-lust starts and spreads is only too horribly familiar. *Maid of Salem* is picturesque, exciting entertainment, brilliantly acted by Miss Colbert and a very powerful cast. If there is any other young actress on the screen who combines Miss Colbert's graces and talents—for comedy, romantic tenderness and tearing drama—she hasn't come this way.

—George Campbell, *The Bystander*

Claudette Colbert, every movement of her eloquent eyes, her tender mouth, her expressive hands, conveying an appealing lovableness, is placed upon trial for witchcraft. Her spirit is torn by the revelation that her mother, in England, was burnt at the stake as a convicted witch. The fugitive rebel who could prove that her secret conversations have been with a dashing lover, and not with the devil, has disappeared. This culminating situation, built up with searching poignancy, is not quite the end. If it were, given the personality of Miss Colbert, we might have had the most harrowing performance since Sybil Thorndike played St. Joan.

—A. T. Borthwick, *The News Chronicle*

*Critical Summary.*

**MAID OF SALEM.** Press and Trade opinions vary. Claudette Colbert is one of the most talented and popular stars on the screen (eighth in the *Motion Picture Herald's* annual box-office poll), but many doubt the wisdom of starring her in this rather sombre and cheerless story. But the critics, if not the trade, can applaud Frank Lloyd for his integrity of purpose and his refusal to weaken the effect by concessions to popular appeal.

**HEAD OVER HEELS.** (Sonnie Hale—Gaumont-British.)
Jessie Matthews, Louis Borell, Robert Flemyng.

I enjoyed this more than any other Jessie Matthews film. Why? Because it has none of those great senseless spectacles with gyrating chorus girls; it does not attempt to make Jessie Matthews a glamour queen glittering in sequins, but allows her to be a normal, charming girl; it has good songs, lyrics and dialogue; and the star has supporting players who contribute something to the entertainment for themselves. Jessie is a cabaret girl who falls for a handsome, conceited young man (Louis Borell), while young faithful, in the shape of Robert Flemyng, hangs around until the last reel before she realises where her heart lies.

—Stephen Watts, *The Sunday Express*

The presence of the osier-bodied Jessie Matthews should be enough to underwrite any film, and though this truism may unduly predispose the Matthews clientele in favour of *Head Over Heels in Love*, it is one that bears repeating. Miss Matthews is the most graceful of all the girl dancers, a shape of infinite lightness which yields itself to every passing breeze and stray impulse of rhythm as naturally as a flower, but in this case, alas, the restrictions of plot permit her to dance too little, and no possible plot—this one, least of all—could be worth such a sacrifice. The film itself, marred in spots by tactless lighting, point-blank camera technique and similar Briticisms, nevertheless contrives to muddle imperially through to its conclusion.

B. R. C., *The New York Times*

*Critical Summary.*

**HEAD OVER HEELS.** "If anything fails in London these days it must be superlative phewy," wrote George Jean Nathan recently. In other words, Englishand Americancritics areseldomable to agree on what constitutes a good play, or more especially on what constitutes a good plot. But in Jessie Matthews they seem to have found a sort of common denominator on which they can agree. This department has always been a little intrigued by the influence she exerts over all and sundry.

Jessie Matthews in "Head over Heels"

A MONTH after the Lumière films were first exhibited commercially in England on February 20th, 1896, at the Polytechnic Theatre, an Englishman, Robert W. Paul, was engaged by the Alhambra to show his own series of moving pictures which were called the Animatograph. Though the Lumière's are responsible for the first films, Paul has to his credit the making of the first "topical"—the Derby of 1896—as well as the first love-story, the 80-ft. film *The Soldier's Courtship*. Soon after the public appearance of the films of Lumière and Paul there came on the scene David Devant, of Maskelyne's Theatre. The first American company which bore his name presented a performance of animated pictures in a small hall of the Queen's Hall, during the intervals of the Promenade Concerts, conducted by Sir (then Mr.) Henry J. Wood.

Meanwhile in America the scientist Edison was improving his slot-machine-film-projector, the Kinetoscope, which had caused considerable interest at the Chicago World Fair in '93. He built a studio costing the fabulous sum of £20,000. The second American company to be formed was the Muroscope. This company, which was the originator of the spectacular film, created a sensation in 1897 by producing the first three-reeler. It was the Salmi Morse version of the *Passion Play*, and £3,200 was spent on preliminaries alone. In 1903 Erwin S. Porter's *Great Train Robbery* appeared, the father of all the Westerns.

Returning to Paris, Georges Méliès, a director of a theatre of magic, realised that the cinema possessed unlimited possibilities in the realm of the fantastic. He bought film from Kodak and projectors from Paul in order to make a 360-ft. picture of *Cinderella*. Whether Méliès' version of *Cinderella* was shown in England one cannot be certain, but Mr. Andrew Block has an interesting programme of a film of that name which was shown at Hastings during Whit-week 1900. The Hastings picture featured an actress, Dorothy Castella. One wonders if this Miss Castella was the first screen actress to be publicised as a "star." During the early years of cinema Méliès, Robert Paul and James A. Williamson invented every imaginable technical trick. Such processes as "stop-motion" and "double-printing' were to be seen in every other film. Not only was Méliès the inventor of "trick cinema," but he was also the father of the *March of Time*. He reconstructed a film of the notorious Dreyfus Case, and also one of the Coronation of Edward VII from official documents.

For several years after the invention of moving pictures, their status was that of a "turn" lasting from fifteen to thirty-five minutes in the programmes of music hall and vaudeville theatres; or as a new side-show on the fair-grounds. At that time pictures were sent on appro. and distributed by appointed "commercial travellers." The second stage in the development of film distribution came when shops were rigged up by enterprising tradesmen for the showing of a programme of short pictures. Price of admission was the modest sum of a nickel in America and 2½*d*. in England.

The picture palace as a special building did not make its appearance until 1908: then buildings of every description, from derelict factories to congregational chapels, were bought up by companies who saw that a boom was on the way. The slogan of the day became "Perfection in Projection." The first picture to put cinema on the way to becoming the fifth industry in America, was the Italian film *Quo Vadis?* of 1913 The exclusive rights of this picture were bought by a shrewd American showman, Charles Kleine, who toured it throughout America. Within twelve months it is said that he made more than £100,000 profit.

In order to supply the increasing demand for films, the few people who made them in the early days were kept exceedingly busy. Between 1896 and 1900, Paul and Williamson were supplying the American market with anything from sixty to eighty films a week. Their pictures also found a market in Germany. Naturally there was a great deal of pirating, and in order to avoid this, Mr. Cecil Hepworth, whose studio at Walton-on-Thames was established in 1899, had a trade-mark—a wooden board with the name of his company on it—visible in every shot.

Hepworth sponsored the first British stars. By 1907 he was making a series of pictures with Chrissie White, then 11 years old, and the dancer Unity Moore. A little later Alma Taylor appeared. In those early days the film business was considered a very lucrative profession for the minimum pay was 4*s*. a day; while the "leads" were paid as much as one or two guineas. Moreover it was regular work so long as the rain kept off! By 1912 movie magnates in America were thinking of "putting actors over big." Adolph Zukor and Daniel Frohman put their heads together in order to decide which actor would be the biggest box-office draw in the world. They decided in favour of Sarah Bernhardt and subsequently bought the rights of her French film *Queen Elizabeth*. From then on stars became all-important. But as Bernhardts were few and far between there was only one thing to do—to make one's own. Hence Zukor formed the company Famous Players and created the "World's Sweetheart," Mary Pickford, who, in October, 1912, received the colossal salary of £100 a week. Previously she had made a number of short films under D. W. Griffiths for the Biograph Company.

Although the cinema was considered fit entertainment only for nursemaids and riff-raff before the war, it had artistic leanings from the outset and literature played an important part in its development. Shakespeare was put through innumerable screen tests before 1914. Dickens was popular: *Oliver Twist* (with the American stage star Nat Goodwin), *Tale of Two Cities* (a Vitagraph production of 1910, costing £3 000), *Xmas Carol*, *Barnaby Rudge* and *David Copperfield* had all been seen before 1912. Dumas was immediately recognised as an

1902 Les Sept Châteaux du Diable

# *Early Days*

## *Part II*

**Miss Seton continues her analysis of the cinema's early days which began in "W.F.N.'s" January issue**

1902 Ballet Apothéose. Les Sept Châteaux du Diable

# *of the Movie*

## *by Marie Seton*

**This is the first time that a detailed study of pre-war movie history has been published**

author with suitable romantic verve for the cinema. The first *Monte Cristo* film was made in America by the Selig company in 1912. But four years earlier, 1908, the Italian company Cines Società of Rome produced an ambitious picture of *The Three Musketeers*; while a second version of this book was made in Paris by the company Film d'Art.

The French version cost £18,000 and was played by an all-star cast drawn from the leading theatres of Paris. To return to Italy. Cines Società of Rome specialised in spectacular films of ancient history. The first to attract attention was *The Fall of Troy*, in which 800 people took part. This was followed by a 1,460 ft. production of *Macbeth* which cost £10,000, a film of Tasso's poem on the crusades and a picture of *Faust*. But the high spot was reached in Italy with the production of Gabriel d'Annunzio's play *Cabiria*, upon which £50,000 was spent. All these films were made between 1907 and 1914.

Two other countries to utilise the novel were Denmark and Russia. Gerhardt Hauptman collaborated with the then important company, Nordisk Films of Copenhagen, when they made a film of his novel *Atlantis*. Judging from records of the making of this film it is one of the rare occasions when a story was adapted for the screen in accordance with the author's ideas. In Russia the novels and stories of Pushkin, Gogol and Tolstoy were the chief material of the pre-war Russian cinema which gained a reputation in Europe during 1912 and 1913. Among the sensations of those years were the extraordinary *Beetle* films made in Russia by Professor Loshki in 1912. Two of these films, *The Beetle's Deception* and *Aviation Week*, have recently been unearthed in a junk-shop, and the former shown at the London Film Society. The method employed in making them is still doubtful. There are three possibilities:—that the beetles are models, that they are dead beetles animated, and thirdly, they may be live beetles performing. In each case the beetles are characters in stories of a type usually associated with French farce.

"Trick Films" had a considerable vogue before 1914. Animated clay, wooden dolls and designs made with matches coming into fashion in turn. In 1907 the first cartoons were made in France by Emil Cohl. Three or four years later, experiments were made in England by Mr. C. Armstrong; while cartoons pasted on to articulated cardboard figures were made in Germany. Germany also produced in 1913 the first version of *The Student of Prague*. In 1913 the American cartoons of Harry Mayer became a regular feature in the cinema. Gradually cartoons superseded other forms of "trick films."

Almost every idea that has developed in the cinema since 1914 existed in some form or another before the war. Even sound and colour occupied a place in the cinema from the beginning. As soon as Edison had invented his Kinetoscope he wished to combine animation with sound. Consequently he devised a machine on the coin-in-the-slot principle which was called the Kinetograph. This machine was installed in cigar-shops and on railway stations, but it did not advance far enough to find its way into the motion picture studio. In Europe an attempt at sound reached the public in 1908. It was the Cinephone and it was simply the coupling of a gramophone record to the projector; the records for the sound being completed first and the images then synchronised to them. The cost of a 1,000 ft. Cinephone film was in the region of £26 10*s*. 10*d*.

The next method was the Vivaphone, introduced by the Hepworth film company, who made three Vivaphone pictures each week. The subject of these talking and singing pictures was generally a direct transference of the music-hall "turn" to the screen. Meanwhile, as far back as 1902 in France, Leon Gaumont invented a means of simultaneous reproduction of sound and motion. His invention, known as the Chronophone, was introduced to the French Photographic Society on November 7th, 1902, but it was not until December, 1910, that Gaumont felt it had advanced sufficiently to be demonstrated publicly to the French Academy of Science.

Colour was also in some people's minds. The first coloured films were hand-tinted and experiments in this method were made by Robert Paul in the late 'nineties. The colouring of the 7,000 ft. film of *The Miracle* was the greatest achievement of this laborious method, for each colourist could only complete eight feet of film daily. The first decisive step in the development of a mechanical means of colouring was made by the photographer Friese Green. He invented a three-colour process by taking pictures successively through red, green and violet filters and projecting them through similarly coloured screens. The results of this process were exhibited to the Royal Photographic Society in 1900. Numbers of other experiments followed, but were never commercialised. Nevertheless these early endeavours are the basis of the later two-colour systems. Another process was that of Albert Smith. Patented in 1906 it was finally introduced to the public in 1908 under the name of Kinemacolour. Kinemacolour's greatest triumph was the Durbar film of 1912.

After the appearance of Kinemacolour, coloured films became a common occurrence. They were usually travelogues similar to the Fitzpatrick's of to-day, or else historical films; the latter were particularly popular in France when Pathé and Gaumont were growing concerns. At that time—just prior to the war—France, Italy, Denmark, America and England were in comparatively equal competition. There was no suggestion that continental films were more highbrow than those of America and England and, therefore, less commercial. Profits were important to all parties, but profitable distribution was open to all countries.

And then came the War. For a short time movie magnates thought more of patriotic propaganda than of their profits.

# NEWSREEL RUSHES

*by*

*The Commentator*

**Gaumont-British Newsreel men**

Another Wardour Street crisis has come and gone like a shower in April—soaking the British Film World in gloom for a day, but soon drying off again. The immediate effect of the Gaumont British "New Deal" on the newsreel world is slight, but it leaves piquant possibilities for the future. Mr. C. M. Woolf's giant selling organisation "General Film Distributors" now finds itself in the possibly embarrassing position of having two newsreels to offer to cinema managers. For it already owns Universal, and now it is to distribute the G.B. News also.

There is no precedent for such a situation in the film industry; for while many department stores sell several brands of ladies' silk stockings and leave it to the customers to choose the brand they prefer, film salesman's patter has been for years based entirely on combining references to their reel as "the world's one and only," with vitriolic talk about all their opponents. If Mr. Woolf eventually finds serving in two shops too difficult for him, he has it within his power to close down Universal completely. Or he may sell out, and then anything may happen.

* * * *

With Michael Balcon looking for fresh fields to till with American ploughs, and M.G.M. distributing a new reel in America (see below), the rumour seems hardly fantastically far-fetched, that an American organisation might conceivably jump at the chance of turning the Universal Talking News into the Universal Sound News—a suggestion that implies no criticism of commentator Jeffrey, who does a good job in his own style. But most competent observers feel that the time has come when Universal can no longer maintain their policy of "manufacturing" all their sound in the studio, of making a drum-beat do for the crash of a giant gun, and a toy whistle imitate the whine of a shell, of offering the public virtually a silent reel with a commentary.

* * * *

American Newsreel troubles. Considering America's press freedom, the story of a U.S. newsreel getting into political hot water seems almost unbelievable. In 1918, U.S. newsemperor William Randolph Hearst owned a newsreel "Hearst-Pathé." When its owner was accused of pro-German bias, he dropped his name out of his reel, changed the title to the "International Newsreel." In 1930, when the times seemed less stormy, Hearst brought his name back again, called the reel the "Hearst Metrotone News." But during the last Presidential election, Hearst became so unpopular for his personal vendetta against Franklin D. Roosevelt, that cinemaddicts who objected to the Hearst policy took to booing the Hearst newsreel, even boycotting cinemas where it was shown.

For the second time the Hearst name was hastily erased, to be kept out until election fever should drop to normal again. But even the name Metrotone had become associated in the public mind with the hated enemy of Roosevelt. So the reel was eventually completely extinguished, and there came to life in its place "News of the Day," with radio commentator Jean Paul King, and distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. The new reel has no obvious contact with Hearst, but newsmen think that he plays exactly the same role in the new set-up as he did in the old. As yet "News of the Day" has no official connection with any British reel for European Coverage; a fact that may be the cause of M.G.M. interest in acquiring control of a British reel (see above).

The Academy special award given to the *March of Time* bears the following inscription: "For its significance to motion pictures, and for having revolutionised one of the most important branches of the industry. Its creativeness is looked upon by the Academy as a shot in the arm for the whole newsreel field."

The committee is headed by Frank Capra, Academy president. They make a special award each year.

Previous special awards were: two, in 1928, to Warners for producing *Jazz Singer*, first all-sound picture, and to Charlie Chaplin for his versatility in writing, acting, directing and producing *The Circus;* to Walter Disney (1934) for creating Mickey Mouse; to Shirley Temple (1935) a half-size statue for her contribution to screen entertainment; and to David Wark Griffith (1936) for distinguished creative achievements.

* * * *

Before granting permission to the newsreel companies to film the Coronation, it was clearly established that all reels must be censored by Dr. Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury. Together with Earl Marshal the Duke of Norfolk, he will have a free hand in eliminating anything he considers unsuitable for general showing throughout the country.

Runners are to be used to transport the reels to the laboratories, and from there to the censorship theatre, so that those who find it impossible to see the procession will see it in the cinemas only a few hours later. But whichever company gets there first, Movietone remains ahead with its exclusive rights to film in Technicolor (weather permitting). Six colour cameras are to be used, mounted on platforms to permit shooting over the crowd. They are also to have one colour and two black and white cameras on the roof of Westminster Hospital, to obtain pictures of the royal party entering and leaving the Abbey. Six seat spaces have been purchased at £50 each.


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# A Remarkable Film

by

**LOUISE WATT**

*AND SO TO WORK*, a new short distributed by Kinograph, unobtrusively slipped into the programmes of several news theatres this month. So brilliant is this two-reeler and so much above the usual comedy of the same length that it has brought immediate recognition to its creator, Richard Massingham.

But this name on the credit titles conveyed nothing to the film industry. Nobody had heard of Richard Massingham, nobody knew with which company he was connected. But *World Film News*, determined to introduce him personally to the public, eventually tracked him down to a most unexpected spot, the London Fever Hospital in Islington. Here we met Dr. Massingham, Resident Medical Officer, a large, good-natured looking person with a grin that explained at once his ability for getting the maximum of humour out of an ordinary situation.

**Dr. Richard Massingham**

With *And So to Work* Massingham has brought to the screen a record of one of the most primitive periods of present-day society —the struggle for existence between 8.15 and 9 a.m. in any boarding-house. It follows the misadventures of a young man during that dreadful three-quarters of an hour with a shrewdness of observance that is devastating. Nothing is missed. The struggle to get up, the final awful determination, the somnambulant first tour of the room in search of dressing-gown and slippers, the fearful calamity of blunt razor and gashed face, the whistler in the bathroom and the costive in the lavatory, the lost laundry, the eaten toast and sticky marmalade jar, all are screened with an ease and understatement that make the film a gem of comedy. It has the glorious effect of giving you a spyhole through which you affectionately watch someone being supremely natural. Never does an action or gesture suggest rehearsals or direction. The spontaneity of the film places it in the true comedy tradition.

Richard Massingham, who qualified at University College Hospital thirteen years ago, experimented originally with a 16 mm. camera. But in 1934, with his first real shooting-script worked out, he bought an ancient hand-turned Newman Sinclair with one lens, a 2″. With a 6″ adapted from a still camera, and six 500-watt lamps, the film was completed in nine months. It was called *Tell Me if it Hurts?* and was the story of a broken tooth and a visit to the dentist. Shooting was done every Sunday in Massingham's own dentist's surgery, and the sound was recorded afterwards at Imperial Sound Studios. Russell Waters, then a student at the Old Vic, and now a leading-part player on tour, was the central character in both films. *Tell Me if it Hurts?* which has not yet reached the cinemas, shows the same biting observancy as *And So to Work*. The incidents are as commonplace and as funny, the direction and acting as unobtrusive and as powerful. It is, perhaps, a trifle too long but Massingham plans to re-cut and shorten it so that he can get distribution and enough money to make another.

Massingham's expenses, compared with the studio two-reeler, are almost negligible. No lavish sets are required. He made *And So to Work* in his own hospital quarters when off duty. No stars needed, no laboriously built-up gags, no conventionally farcical situations to get laughs. Massingham's humour is analytic and his dissection of ordinary people doing ordinary things brings a breath of fresh air to a cinema public tired of redundant and unfunny comedies.

Not only has Massingham shown that high-powered equipment, high-powered stars, and high-powered overheads are the least guarantee of a good film but he has again proved that it is the real people who are the best screen material. That stage situations, theatre acting, and vaudeville jokes cannot be lifted bodily from one medium to another and remain potent. Richard Massingham must be thanked as well for his object lesson to the film industry as for his two first-class contributions to cinema.

*And So to Work*

*On Rising*

*On taking the Waters*

*On Bathing*

*On Losing One's Collar Stud*

"What this country needs is more marriages, more homes and a bonus for every baby."—*Mae West.*

"I'm really a singing vagabond at heart."—*Nelson Eddy.*

"I fall madly in love with my leading men—only during the making of a picture."—*Marlene Dietrich.*

"I read nothing but classical and historical biographies."—*Bobby Breen.*

"Woolf! Woolf!"—*A British Film Tycoon.*

## *IT'S THE GYPSY IN THEM*

Thumbing through a bundle of publicity material that had found its way, delicately scented, to my desk, I came across the following little gem of information:

> "In order to avoid being disturbed, they (the directors of a large chain of cinemas) take a seven-seater Daimler and drive into the Park. Here they hold their meetings complete with Shorthand Typist and Secretary."

Sometimes, if you are unlucky, you may catch a glimpse of the Daimler drawn in among the trees while the directors hold noisy revelry in a bosky glade and twine vine-leaves in the greasy hair of the typist, and reporters dressed as fauns and satyrs dance among them, trying to get a glance at the shorthand notes, stained now with champagne and tomato sandwiches.

As dusk falls, the great car bears its human freight homewards, tired but happy; now pausing to allow the Chairman to leer at an old woman selling matches, now gathering speed as a dissenting director is thrown out on his great fleshy ear.

Other instances of bizarre board-meetings have been supplied to me by my staff of stooges. It is not generally known, for instance, that *Punk Pictures* hold their meetings on a roundabout on Hampstead Heath, because the directors just *love* going round in circles. The board of *Filthfilms* meets in a disused refuse-barge at Chiswick; while a special cell is set aside at Dartmoor for the directors of *Phoneyfilms*, all of whom by a happy chance are down at this popular Devon retreat together.

Turning from Mr. Coward's photograph to the title page, one gazes at the title, "Present Indicative," and asks oneself, 'Indicative of what?' Mr. Coward has plenty of time in which to discover this. —*St. John Irvine*

### *Once round the critics and back in time for tea*

C. A. Lejeune
Has a lot to leune.

Paul Holt
Has only one folt.
He likes to pan
As much as he can.

It is not within the province of this organ
To guy Morgan.

Jympson Harman
Is rather charman.

Pat Mannock
Never gets into a pannock.

Stephen Watts
Is full of *bon motts.*

Reg. Whitley
Writes pritley.

Richard Haestier
Makes many a nice gaestier.

Ian Coster
Is next on the roster.
He is a menace
At tenace.

Campbell Dixon
Is never caught mixon
His metaphors
As we do ors.

**Beastly Biographies No. 1**

## MIASMA DEL MONTI

Born in Russia in 1845, she became a steppe-dancer at the Imperial Ballet in Snakba. Getting the Imperial Bullet from the Imperial Ballet, she fled to England to escape the Revolution. The Revolution did not follow.

After wide stage experience (anything but a wide stage being much too narrow) she stowed away in a cattle-boat to California and was never noticed except by the cattle. Made her debut in pictures as a midwife in *The Birth of a Nation.* Played the name part in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and one of the hindparts in *The Four Horsemen.*

Her films include *Scratch My Back, Oh, No, You Don't, I Wasn't Talking to You, Let's Change the Subject, How's Your Father?* Hobbies: bird's nesting, baseball and insulting bus-conductors. Colour of eyes: muddy. Complexion (and everything else): ruddy.

# Edited by

### Mask Me Another

*She wears a special rubberised make-up mask that covers her entire face, merely accentuating her best features and smoothing over the others.*—American Fan Magazine.

There won't be no shooting to-day, boys,
You're spared from your onerous task,
Miss Lulu La Salle
(Such a madcap, that gal),
Has forgotten her rubberised mask.
It seems it was hung out to dry, boys,
And the garbage-man took it away;
Without it her pan's
Hardly fit for the fans,
So there won't be no shooting to-day,
Hey, hey,
There won't be no shooting to-day.

**DAVE ROBSON SAYS:**

Physical jerks to the accompaniment of music from the films might well be the cinema's contribution to the nation's "get fit" appeal now being launched.

Leg theory in the cinematic sense has but one real interpretation—and that is expressed in bare legs, thigh high. Figures are not even viewed as mere numerals, to the cinemagoer, who finds physical figures more alluring—more exhilarating.

Physiologic deduction therefore decrees that the shapely forms of the fair sex, as seen from the screen tripping out a light fantastic to the rhythm of a popular fox-trot, will have more effect than Sir Kingsley's oratorical, national anthem. Not much room, it's true, to do contortionist tricks in between rows of tip-up seats, but judging from the acrobatics performed by mating couples in cinemas, I am sure that such exercise will give colour to the Birth of a new and better Nation, of which the cinema and Sir Kingsley will have just reason to be proud.

*Now*, sir!

Miss Dietrich may be gorgeous
In filmy crepe-de-chine,
When playing one of the Borgias
Or the Empress Josephine;
Miss Dietrich may be glamorous
As lovely Helen of Troy,
At times, superbly amorous,
At others, gay and coy—
But the verdict of her cutter
Would take her down a peg,
For to him she's bread and butter
And strips of pos. and neg.

G. BRYANT

# LORUM

## Rodney Hobson Salade Russe

You want to produce a film. Good. I will help you. First you must think of a subject. There are three methods: (*a*) See a successful play. Buy it. If the actors are successful, buy them too. If you haven't got any money I will lend it to you. (*b*) Fill one of Mr. Korda's hats with historical names (except Mr. Arliss). Take a pick. Buy a professor and a Hungarian writer. (*c*) Buy a very well-known actress and leave it to back-projection. This is known as the Salade Russe method.

Now you will want to buy a director. There are hundreds of directors waiting to direct your picture. If you have chosen an Irish subject, choose a Russian director. If you have a Russian subject choose a German director. If you have an English subject leave it alone.

You have bought your director. Good. Now buy a studio. You have a very artistic temperament (mem. have it photographed), therefore you will want a studio far out in the country in the middle of a deer park, with a castle. There must be a moat around the castle. The moat serves two essential purposes: 1. It is artistic. 2. You can throw directors, old script writers, or bailiffs into it.

Now invite two or three cinema renters to dinner. (I will pay the bill.) You might ask a critic too. Tell them you are going to make a film. If (*a*) Give them tickets to see the play; (*b*) give them an Outline of History (that's all from Mr. Wells); if (*c*) give them a signed photograph. Now they know you are going to do something big.

Now form a company. Lots of nice people have been making money from steel, stealing, or stalemating, and will give you their money because they think you are an artist. There are other reasons too, but you don't want to worry about that.

Now go straight ahead. Invite everybody in the film world to a huge dinner. Ask a few Englishmen too. Talk big but seem tortured by art. In any case you will pass on the torture. And talk about England. The Press will love it. If you tell them you are going to make an English picture, the Press will not only believe you, they will make you believe it. You will read it in the papers. PETER BROOKE

**Snooks Grieser, W.F.N.'s envenomed lift-boy, ensnared a certain I. Ostrer in mid-shaft recently.**

*Snooks* "So way back in '31 you offered G.B. to the Government."

*I. Ostrer* "I want to say emphatically . . ."

*Snooks* "And they didn't want it, huh?"

*I. Ostrer* "I should like to . . ."

*Snooks* "So maybe you'd like to see the whole industry nationalised, huh?

"Third floor, shares, debentures, proxies, chairmen, directors, and *World Film News*."

## A BALLAD OF THE BREADLINE

*An Old Member:*

"What is this crush in the breadline to-night,
Carruthers?
I shouldn't look now, but did you invite
These others?
Who are these fellows who stand in a group
Like brothers,
Huddled together and sipping their soup,
Carruthers?"

*His Friend:*

"They're men of the recent 'economy' rout,
Technicians,
Cameramen, carpenters,now all without
Positions.
Bred in the Industry, ready and keen
To back it."

*A Voice:*

"You say The Industry, surely you mean
The Racket?"

## Spring is Here —or Something

Spring is such a lovesome thing: such a lovesome thing is Spring! See the happy boys and goils, coming out all over boils; down in ev'ry leafy glade, see the lover and his maid; see with what ethereal grace she takes aim and slaps his face. Hear the peewit's plaintive cry, "What-a-pretty-thing-am-I!" Hear the cuckoo's answering note, "Cut-yourself-a-slice-of-throat." See in every copse and hedge, Nature's lavish fruits and veg. Catch the heady scent of stock, dandelion and Old-Man's-Sock. Sell your *Punk Productions Ord.;* pack a bag and go abroad.

★

Jean Harlow
Reminds me of a marsh-marlow.

To Joan Crawford
I would gladly have awford
Everything I own
If she hadn't acquired Tone.

Gary Cooper
Is rather sooper.

I should like to be something other
Than a brother
To Jean Arthur
(And I don't mean farthur).

Arthur Dent
Fasts in Lent
At the Savoy
Oh boy!

**A well-known British Producer addresses his shareholders. Left to right, representative of the bank, debenture holder, the producer, a nominee (IN DISGUISE).**

# SWITZERLAND

**£ buys 40% more Swiss money**

yet—

- **no formalities with money**
- **prices to suit every pocket**
- **quality remains unimpaired**
- **short and inexpensive journey**
- **direct rail and air services**
- **cheap petrol for motorists**
- **holiday centres for all Seasons**

Best value in Holiday Travel

**THE PERFECT COUNTRY FOR A CAMERA HOLIDAY**

**INFORMATION:** Swiss Railways and State Travel Bureau, 11B Regent Street, S.W.1, and Leading Travel Bureaux

# SPEAKING OF FILMS . . .

## Were We?

As you are reading World Film News you should be. If you are interested in them beyond regarding them as a medium for your personal entertainment, you will find this new publication, CINEMA MANAGEMENT, covers every aspect of the multitudinous ramifications of exhibiting and theatre control.

Its policy is independency, and its function is to help the independent exhibitor. The Service department is a veritable gold-mine of information, its make-up and features are the snappiest in the trade. If you would like a specimen copy send 2*d*. in stamps to :

CINEMA MANAGEMENT
6 TOWER HILL
LONDON, E.C.3

# PEOPLE WITH PURPOSES

## *Readers will welcome this helpful summary of what is happening in propaganda, religion, advertising, education*

*FILM as propaganda.* The political parties make films, or exhibit them, in support of their views. The National Government and the Liberals use "prosperity" films, specially created to publicise the recent trade recovery, while the ordinary newsreels recently showed a long and brilliantly presented sequence in justification of the new defence programme, and frequent shots of troops and battleships mirror the ideals and intentions of the government. Specially created films are used in country districts where a film-show is a novelty, either in support of candidatures or for background propaganda. The Labour parties are active in the use of films: *The Defence of Madrid*, *The International Column in Action* and a Soviet film *The Road to Life* have recently had showings in various parts of the country.

National propaganda (Come to Britain) is in its early stages, but already a fair number of films have been made for export by the Travel Association. The Canadian Government shows films in this country, and the Irish Tourist Association contemplates a film campaign of some pretensions.

*Film as publicity.* As distinct from background propaganda, film is used by some of the larger industrial and transport interests for direct or indirect publicity. Ford and Morris and Austins give film displays in showrooms and lecture halls. All the Railways have adopted film as the natural extensions of the free lantern slides they have provided for years. Polytechnic Tours, Cooks, I.C.I., Cadburys, National Benzole, Boots, Courtaulds, the Gas Light and Coke Co., the Book Council, Ceylon Tea Propaganda Board, Shell, H.M.V. These are some of the interests which use film as part of their publicity campaigns.

*Film as instruction.* Emphasis on school-films tends to obscure the fact that films are being widely used in conjunction with lectures to adults. Air-raid precautions are taught by film in many places. Miners are taught safety measures by film. Lecture and demonstrations to women are illustrated with films on machine-sewing, jam making, etc.; such hobbies as football and photography are the subject of other films for adult audiences; engineers use film in lecturing on glass-making, marine engines, steel hardening, brick-making; and doctors enlist film in lecturing on the prevention of venereal disease, tuberculosis and diphtheria.

*Film and Church.* The most interesting of all users of non-theatrical film is the Church. It was stated recently at Nottingham by the general secretary of the Religious Film Society that the Society has produced about thirty specialised films for evangelical purposes, and that the demand for such films was overtaxing the powers and resources of the producers. This is at first sight amazing, for not one of the commercial films mentioned above has anything like thirty films: in fact most of them have only made one or two. But we must bear in mind that the Church is one of the biggest concerns in the country, with branches everywhere, so that it is natural that even preliminary experiments in the use of film should be on a far bigger scale than those of business houses.

Here are some titles of religious films: *The Sin Bearer*, *The Life of Joseph*, *The Life of Christ* (4 hours), *God in Nature and the Human Soul*, *Sheba's God*, *Barabbas*, *Giants and Grasshoppers*, *The Common Round*, *Light in Livingstone's Land.* Shortage of religious films has caused some churchmen to use commercial films as attraction for religious meetings. This has caused comment from the local trade in some places.

If spite of trade opposition, the movement for religious films is developing rapidly. The official organ of the U.F. Church of Scotland, "Stedfast," recently published an article in support of church films. Pioneer work is being done by individual ministers in parts of England (e.g. Sheffield and Bristol). Outside this movement and violently opposed to film in all its aspects are the Irish Bishops, who continue to fulminate against the influence of what they consider to be a dangerous and disruptive social force.

*Film and State.* The Empire Marketing Board made about a hundred films. The G.P.O. has already made about forty. The War Office has made about a score of films, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries about a dozen, and films have also been made by the Air Ministry and the Ministry of Labour. Of these, the E.M.B. and G.P.O. films and some of the others are conceived in very broad terms as instruments of public address. Some of them on the other hand are technical instruction films for domestic use.

"Mastership" — Religious Film Society

**"The church . . . one of the biggest concerns in the country . . . its film activities will be on a bigger scale than those of business houses."**

Film holds out great possibilities for public instruction and civic education, for social analysis and report, for exposition of policy. But things move slowly in the meantime. The Ministry of Health, for instance, seems to have made no films at all, a very surprising thing: this Ministry indeed left it to the Gas, Light and Coke Company to make *Housing Problems* and *Enough to Eat*, two of the most brilliant essays in public instruction that have so far been seen. R.F.

## Cost of Shows, per head

Austin Motor Company film programmes in their dealers' showrooms and local lecture halls cost, on an average, 9*d.* per head of the audience.

Cadbury Brothers spend 6*d.* a head on showing a 1½-hour programme of films to family audiences; and 3*d.* per head on showing a dealer-instructional film to confectioners.

J. F. Bramley, of Austin Motors, says:

"Our figure is much higher than Cadburys because we have to go to a different class of people—the class likely to buy a motor-car. Even at ninepence a head, we consider our film advertising very economical and we propose to continue it. We get the attention of those people for over an hour, plus the opportunity of showing them our new models and putting a catalogue into their hands."


WE HAVE 2 DAYS OF RECKONING

Our films have to please two interested parties. The advertiser demands that our films make sales. Cinema managers demand that our films are good entertainment. Well, we're still in business after a good many years—and last year's output was 68 per cent up on the previous year. So we must be making SUCCESSFUL advertising films

EUROPE'S LARGEST SELF-CONTAINED ADVERTISING FILM ORGANISATION

PUBLICITY FILMS Ltd

*Managing Director:* G. E. TURNER

FILMICITY HOUSE, UPPER ST. MARTIN'S LANE, W.C.2

P.F.

TELEPHONE: *Temple Bar* 6482

*Service for Documentary Producers . . . .*

SOUND CUTTING ROOMS

PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT

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OFFICE SPACE

LIBRARY SERVICE

ACCOUNTANCY

*Make Your New Film through . . . . . .*

The STRAND FILM Co. Ltd. 37-39 Oxford St. W.1

# SIGHT AND SOUND

***WINTER 1936-37***
***SIXPENCE***

**THE FILM QUARTERLY** **FOR NEWS & VIEWS**

FILMS FOR CHILDREN

**SIDNEY BERNSTEIN** **SIMON ROWSON** **EMANUEL MILLER**

**IVOR MONTAGU**
**The Moyne Report**

**ALISTAIR COOKE**
**Films of the Quarter**

**FRANK GOODLIFFE**
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FULLY ILLUSTRATED

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**BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE • 4 Gt. Russell Street, London, W.C.I**

# Advertising by Film

## By P. B. Redmayne

## Advertising Manager of Cadbury Brothers

FILM advertising has developed enormously during the past few years. In particular, the use of road-show programmes of different kinds, generally 16 mm. sound, has increased. For the most part, however, these programmes are run by Film Companies for manufacturers. All too often there is little sign that the manufacturer has given careful thought to these programmes.

Cadburys are one of the oldest and most consistent advertisers by means of films. They started using them in pre-war days, and have used them, in one form or another, without a break since the War. For this reason their experience may be of particular interest.

Generally, film publicity is divided into two kinds—

(*a*) "Shorts" in cinemas.

(*b*) Longer programmes generally given as road-shows and not in cinemas.

The purposes and costs of these are so entirely different that they can hardly be compared.

Taking first of all the 500 ft. "short" in cinemas, the general estimated cost for this is between 15*s.* and £1 per 1,000 viewers. It is difficult to judge the value of such films, and almost impossible to assess by sales returns. It can be said, however, that they are most useful for giving general publicity to the product and its name, and for this purpose a film which is 90% entertainment and 10% advertisement is often used.

As such, I think they should be used only by very large companies who have the extra money available for spending on this form of publicity to back-up their general advertising.

Another way in which they can be used is in what might be called "institutional" advertising —that is, making an interesting picture concerned with the firm or with the manufacture of the product. Here again, this is primarily for a large firm. While we have used this type of film for many years the tendency more recently has been to reduce our advertising in this way and put more and more into road-shows.

To my mind, the more important form of film advertising is that usually associated with road-show programmes. I say usually associated because, of course, the same programme can be given in a different way—hiring cinemas during the morning, and sometimes in the afternoon, and showing to specialised audiences.

About this type of programme, there are two theories: one, that the major part of the programme should be pure entertainment with one or two short films reserved for advertising; the other, that such a programme is not worth doing unless you can do the thing in a thoroughly interesting manner with the propaganda which you wish to put across.

The first theory (pure entertainment and a little advertising) is, I believe, most generally held. Probably because it is much the easier, and the cheaper programme to prepare, and films have to be sold to many firms who could not afford, or provide, material for a whole-length programme.

The danger in this is the difficulty of getting good films cheaply. Several of the programmes I have seen were very dull efforts, suitable perhaps for a Sunday School treat on a wet afternoon, but not as a piece of advertising for people in the habit of going regularly to the cinema. Of this type of programme I cannot speak from experience because we have never used it. I can only give my opinion that the standard of quality is often deplorably low, and that the advertisers need to be very careful that nothing is shown which is not first-class entertainment. I believe that a generally accepted cost per head for these shows works out at about 6*d.* The advertiser must consider whether he is getting sixpenny-worth of advertising to each of his audience.

The type of film advertising we ourselves have used most is a film programme, lasting 1¼ hours, dealing with our own firm and its raw materials. Little of this programme is "direct" advertising for any line; in fact, the whole programme is "institutional" or "background" advertising. I consider that a story presented in this way is of very great value. It is the next best thing to an actual visit to the Works. If people are prepared to spend 1¼ hours seeing a programme of this kind, and their interest can be kept for the whole time, then I think it is good advertising.

A programme of this kind must be done well. If it is second-rate the interest of the audience will be lost and the value of the whole programme ruined. This means that it is only worth while if a considerable amount of money can be spent on it to justify the production cost of anything from £5,000 upwards.

Besides sub-standard units, we run continually three full-size 35 mm. sound units which tour the country with lecturers. Audiences naturally vary according to the parts of the country we are in, but we rarely show to less than a quarter of a million people in a season. Where it is possible we book up a local cinema, but this can only occur in the smallest places. Usually we have to hire a hall in the town, and give performances in the afternoon and evening for three days. The unit is always accompanied by two men who are responsible, not only for booking halls and for local showing arrangements, but for linking up with our customers in the town and attending at the hall every day to give tickets and reserve seats.

We find these public performances are considerably cheaper than showing to specialised audiences. We get the whole thing for a cost of under 3*d.* per head. We also run similar shows with sub-standard machines to women's institutes, schools, social clubs, etc., but there the cost is more than double the cost of public performances.

We also book cinemas on Saturday mornings and show to school audiences. This is best done through arrangements made with the local Education Authority, so as to get their support and the interest of the teachers.

New uses of any media are always most valuable. I have left our most striking success till last. That is a long educational film for our customers. I had seen similar things shown on sub-standard sets to Grocers' Associations, etc., but the confectionery trade is much bigger and less organised, and we decided that the only way to interest them would be to give shows in cinemas in the mornings. We have now been round most of the country. The film was very carefully prepared and was primarily a contrast between a sweet shop run by an old lady, who was always in a muddle, and that run by a modern confectioner. We felt that just to make the contrast would be too heavy going for the majority of audiences, so the "pill" was wrapped up in a light story form.

The cost of these showings is hardly comparative with the others because the numbers in the audiences varied, and also because we always gave refreshments, etc. In some places it came out at several shillings per head, but even this high figure we feel would be justified if we were successful in getting half of our customers to do but one of the things advocated in the film—to be ready for our travellers when they call instead of keeping them waiting or asking them to call back again later.

# TECHNICAL NOTES

## Hints on Lighting

By H. Chevalier

ONE OF THE first things to learn when shooting colour pictures is that "flat" lighting will never produce good results. The old adage "Expose for the shadows, and the high lights will take care of themselves" is not only misleading, but will positively kill the shot.

In colour photography, the high lights are the snag. If they are overexposed they become a colourless white glare exceedingly unpleasant, and underexposed, they play the devil with shadows. So the first rule in colour work becomes: Expose for the high lights and balance the shadow to suit.

Many cine-fans believe an uninteresting flat lighting is essential for safe working with Kodachrome. This is by no means the case, for good lighting is equally desirable in colour, as in black and white. This belief no doubt is a "hang-over" from the early days of colour work when the chief problem was to obtain enough light for an exposure, and one had no time to worry about quality.

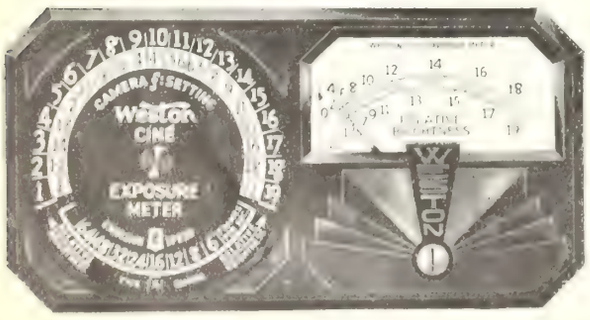
When Kodachroming, it is desirable to arrange the lighting exactly as one would for black and white, then increase the intensity, in this way obtaining a more natural effect.

The reason for the increase in light is due to the increased amount of work the light is expected to do when shooting colour.

Technicolor, the professional three colour process and Kodachrome's three colour film have great similarities for they are crossed licensed. In Technicolor, three separate films are used in what is known as a Splitter-Beam camera and increased light is required, because it has to be split up or divided between the three films. In Kodachrome only one film is used and the light must penetrate and act upon the three separate layers of emulsion, coating the film. The similarity between the two processes calls to mind the great care exercised by Technicolor cameramen when setting lights. Care that will well repay the sub-standard cine-fan, for the trouble involved.

Before each shot, light readings are taken by means of a Weston Photo-cell illuminometer, and carefully checked for back, side and front lighting intensities, before a single frame of negative is exposed.

It follows, that if people who have thousands of pounds in overheads mounting every minute, find time to stop and check lighting for every shot, the amateur should never use his camera without first consulting a reliable exposure meter.




When using colour for the first time, many amateurs find difficulty in balancing shadows, for they discover too late that shadows add "life" to the picture to a greater extent than in black and white.

Using artificial light one can control the shadows at will, obtaining soft, misty half-shadows for natural effects, or rich black shadows for dramatic action.

I find that Kodachrome revels in the latter, producing shadows with such body that they appear cut from black velvet. This type of shadow is fairly simple to obtain by setting lighting for the high lights and middle lights then keeping as much light as possible away from the shadow areas. However since Kodachrome has considerable less latitude than black and white, it is a necessity to see that middle lights are well contrasted, in other words that there is a considerable difference in intensity between the middle lights and the shadows.

For more natural effects with colour, one should allow a ratio of one-third the intensity of the high lights in the shadow areas.

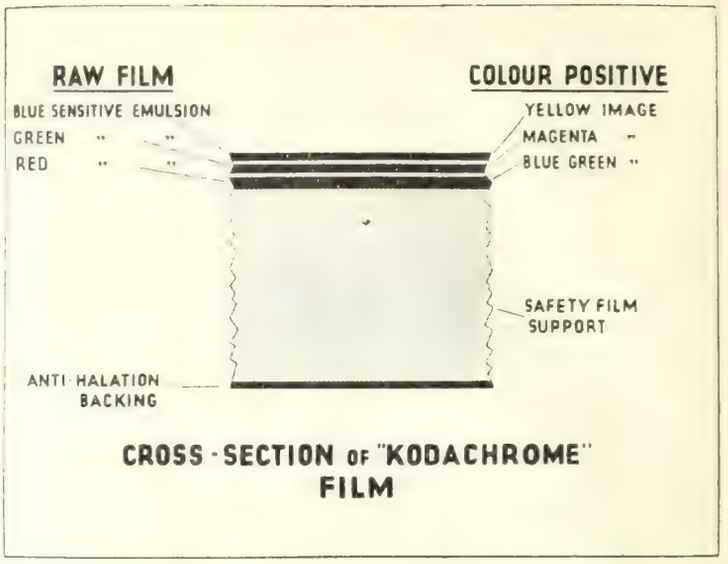
When using a Weston Cine-Exposure meter, to balance the lighting to the ratio of 1 : 3, proceed in the following way.

Take a reading with the "B" or normal pointer on your "Weston" and set your high lights to give a good exposure.

Then take a reading of the shadow lighting intensity, still keeping the "B" pointer set as before on the high light reading. If your shadow reading then corresponds to the light value number, ONE point LEFT of the "A" or left hand pointer the shadow is receiving about one third the intensity of the high light.

If the light is not quite balanced, move the lights nearer or farther from the object, until the meter informs you the value is correct.

By following these simple rules you will shoot better colour pictures and do justice to Kodachrome. However I would point out that my suggestions do not in all cases correspond with Kodak's instructions for shooting colour, so write and tell me what your experience or opinion has proved, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for a personal reply.




CROSS-SECTION OF "KODACHROME" FILM

## Editing Colour Films

Editing colour films is not generally considered until the negative is exposed and processed. This attitude may be satisfactory in the case of black and white, but entirely incorrect for colour work.

Obtaining the best results from a colour film requires a more inclusive view of editing, both before and during the actual filming.

Perfect balance is the secret of colour work, and editing commences when the first rough outline of the film is committed to paper, and the producer must consider the scenes in their relationship, sequence and term of colour. This prevents serious clashes between indoor and outdoor scenes, or even between the scenes themselves, when say a sudden red may destroy a harmony of pastel shades in the setting.

Every detail should be considered, the location of the story, type of characters, colouring of face, hair, clothing, properties and backgrounds. Keeping a watchful eye on these details will produce a smoothness of working not at first apparent. Arrangement of shooting angles and sequences will avoid major clashes, deciding automatically the main colour key of the film as a whole.

When watching scenes that follow each other, one must consider also the variations in colour on the film caused by slight errors in exposure. Differences in the time of day, of the exposure, or any change of lighting conditions from daylight to artificial light and changing sky colour, will all materially effect the smoothness of the colour flow.

Remember scenes shot in the morning light will seldom match up with scenes shot later in the day, or even on a different day. Nature constantly changes her lighting and atmospheric conditions, so watch this point carefully.

The shooting of all scenes to be included in one sequence on the same roll of film, will later simplify editing for colour harmony.

Providing correct exposure is secured, all scenes photographed at the same time on the same roll of film will produce indentical colour results. For all scenes will be on the same emulsion and processed in the same chemical baths at the same time. This produces the maximum degree of constancy of colour within sequences, simplifying future editing.

## Technical Notes (*contd.*)

When shooting skies with Kodachrome and a haze filter, remember the filter will naturally affect future editing seriously. As its name indicates, the haze filter is designed to overcome hazy atmospheric conditions and improve the colour value under hazy conditions. This is correct with Kodachrome in all cases except a blue sky, for a haze filter definitely lightens up the blue of a sky, and even deep blue skies appear blue grey when photographed through a haze filter.

* * * *

Regarding a splice, a minimum of film cement should be used, for any overflow on the film washes out part of the colour around the splice and makes it very noticeable when projected.

When scraping emulsion from the film preparatory to making a splice, remember only remove the emulsion down to the bluish base.

Finally, when handling colour film during editing, ALWAYS use white cotton gloves. For any colour film is far more quickly and easily finger marked or scratched, than black and white, and must be handled under scrupulously clean conditions.

## Record of Painting

G. E. Prentice, of Berlin, Connecticut, has recently completed a 300 ft. film, in 16 mm. Kodachrome, of an artist painting a picture. The artist was that eminent Swedish painter of marine subjects, Leon Lundmark, who creates the stirring beauty of North Atlantic Seas.

The film is believed to be the first complete record in colour of an artist painting a picture from the bare canvas to the finished creation.

Prentice has given many screenings of the film before art classes and groups around Connecticut.

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## Forthcoming Books

Among forthcoming books from Newnes, who publish so many books on the cinema, are two of special interest. "Movie Merry-go-Round" (7/6 net) is by John Paddy Carstairs. No man could have been better qualified to write this book than Carstairs, whose whole life has been a vivid merry-go-round in the movie world. The book is said to strike a new note, being half-way between the highbrow professional and the popular fan stuff, thus appealing to a double public. Can this be done? is a question that W.F.N. readers will be better able to answer after reading the book. "Guest" chapters by such notabilities as Joan Crawford, Jessie Matthews and Walt Disney are an interesting new feature.

"The Cinema as a Graphic Art" is a serious and important work which no one interested in the future of the cinema should miss. It is, in fact, a book for which many of us have been waiting for a long time, and Vladimir Nilssen was the ideal man to write it. It deals exhaustively with pictorial composition in the making of films, and expounds the theory that each and every shot should be a consciously composed picture in itself. We think it is likely to create a good deal of discussion in the film world, and it is certain to offer many new ideas to jaded technicians. (10*s.* 6*d.* net.) **Advt.**

# *How to Select a Sound Projector*

By Dave Robson

THE purchase of standard or substandard sound film projectors calls for serious consideration. No longer should the word of a clever salesman or the smart appearance of a projector be the guiding factor in the selection.

Actual use over a period of time supplies the best test of the stability and consistency of the machine—the only real safeguard against subsequent regrets.

Speaking collectively of all machines, there is none fool-proof. So much depends on the individual handling of each and every machine that one is liable to hear varying reports on quality and efficiency.

But there are definite things to look for. What, for example, do you know of the S.M.P.E. and D.I.N. sound standards on a 16 mm. projector? To buy a projector on the last-named standard would be an embarrassment because recently an official board of arbitration decided in favour of S.M.P.E. with the result that some manufacturers of 16 mm. machines are now having to alter their projectors to accommodate the required system.

The power consumption of the apparatus is an important consideration, not only because of subsequent expense but also because of possible wiring difficulties on the premises where the projector is to be used. Alternating current is necessary, as in its absence a rotary converter will have to be used. This means an addition of £17 to £25 on the cost.

The final test of any sound reproducer lies in its ability to play back on film a constant note, without a waver in the sound over a period of minutes. If it cannot do so, reject it finally, because it will never improve, even after "running in." On the other hand it will actually get worse.

As far as the mechanics of the machine are concerned, you must first look into the movement for drawing the film into the aperture. It should definitely be one of the following:

*a*. An intermittent movement employing a Maltese cross and cam, the sprocket engaging in at least two perforations of the film at each pull.

*b*. Equally satisfactory is a shuttle movement likewise engaging in two perforations at each turn. (This is of utmost importance.)

Further points:—

1. All sprockets should be fitted with pad or guide rollers that lift off and are retained clear of them so that threading is simplified and danger of damage to the film considerably reduced.

2. See that the aperture plates, gates and springs are accessible and easily removed.

3. See that provision is made for automatic engagement of the film perforations over the intermittent sprocket.

4. See that the threading is simple and that it does not demand twists in the film.

5. See that the sound-gate slit, through which the light shines on to the sound track, is not hard to get at in order to keep clean and that the photo cell and exciter lamps are positively of the pre-focussed or fixed type. The focussing of an exciter lamp is a delicate matter. It is a job for experts. The exciter lamp of the machine selected should be pre-set by the manufacturers, i.e. non-adjustable.

As for the light source, the lamp should also be of the pre-focussed type and should be in the region of 500 to 1,000 watts, certainly not less if an efficient light is required for a throw from thirty to seventy feet. The lamp should preferably be air-cooled from a fan, and a humidifier should be employed that blows a damp column of cold air on the film.

The machine should ideally be capable of loading 1,600 feet reels; the take-up drive should be directly coupled. (Belts and chains are not so reliable and are likely to give trouble.)

Finally, choose a lens to give you the size of picture you desire for your screen and state the projector throw to the dealer.

## Picture Projection

THERE ARE 1,440 separate pictures to every ninety feet of 35 mm. standard cinematograph film, of which 24 are projected every second. However, you are possibly unaware that you actually see each separate picture twice on the screen in rapid succession, making a total of 2,880 visions per minute.

This is necessary to make the action smooth and flickerless on the screen, in every 1/24th of a second you see the same picture twice. The reason for this is because a two-bladed fan, or shutter, as it is professionally termed, is called upon to cut off the light from the film as it is being drawn into the projection aperture, and the second blade again cuts off the light when the film is standing stationary for the 1/24th of a second during projection to balance the light period.

By virtue of this fact alone, some 50% of the possible light to the screen is lost, and other factors such as film density, optic losses, and air pollution allow but only an infinitesimal amount of the original generated light to ever reach the screen.

In addition to these light losses, perforated rubber screens used in Cinemas to allow the sound to penetrate, cause considerable absorbtion of light, therefore, one will appreciate the enormous candlepower necessary to project a moving image to the screen. Cleanliness is the very essence of success, and every cinema operator knows that, for not only has he to keep his optics clean, but also the 1/10,000″ area through which the sound passes on its way to the loud speakers, for a particle of dust or dirt would turn that sound into a distorted jumble.

* * * *

## New Talking Machine

A new talking machine has just been perfected. A thin serrated strip of fibre is pulled through a little tin about the size of a tin of boot polish. The tin is really a microphone with a vibrating point in the middle. The serrated fibre rubs on this vibrating point and a voice—Cissie, if you pull the fibre quickly; American, if you pull it moderately; hesitatingly senile if slowly—says "Crikey! That's Shell, that was."

# FILM YOUR OWN VIEWPOINT

## *By Andrew Buchanan (Seventh of a Series for Amateurs)*

HAVING learnt how to apply imagination to the filming of "views" in the countryside and the town, the factory and the farm, the time is ripe for filming your own views: for an attempt to put on the screen your ideas on problems of national and international importance. Ambitious? Certainly, yet perfectly possible. But to express one's views on the screen is surely to descend to propaganda! True, but there are two kinds of propaganda; the first is widespread. It imprisons us, and strives to perpetuate the existing order of things. It is very proper propaganda, so proper that it is not regarded as propaganda at all! The second kind seeks to alter existing conditions—to make the civilised world a finer and more intelligent place. It is always denounced—impropaganda, in fact.

Now although one's views must be for or against something, the successful screen journalist is the man who can see both sides of a question, present them with a minimum of bias, and leave his audience to draw its own conclusions. As an artist he is satisfied with having set them thinking—in itself an achievement! No one can be utterly impartial, non-political, non-sectarian, and all the rest of it, but one can certainly rise above the angry mass and, from a height, look down on the scene, observing the percentage of truth in both sides, which is invisible to all those distracted by the struggle.

### Everything is Propaganda

The amateur director should seek to strike a happy medium between the superficial newsreel and the penetrating *March of Time*, and as he is not concerned with the difficulties of presenting propaganda on a commercial screen, he can shoot who he likes, how he likes. Everything is propaganda for something or somebody. Maybe it is American Womanhood, glorified in practically every Hollywood feature, or the British Army patronised in every newsreel. It may be something really useful like the telephone—but regardless of subject matter, there is room for creative treatment in the analysing and building up of a sequence which seeks to solve or clarify important problems, and it will do the amateur director a lot of good to concentrate on the job of utilising his everyday surroundings to exemplify his points. This entails dramatising reality—reconstructing certain past events in order to show how they have created a current position. He will find his themes offering many opportunities for using up material previously shot, and it will have a new significance—whether a football crowd, a branch of blossom or a cat fight.

Let us consider a subject of universal interest—Rearmament. Why does a nation increase its arms? Is it logical for it to do so? Is the crippling expense really worth it? Will the present generation benefit, or is all this defence business for future generations—or for the sake of those who make the armaments? If the amateur feels that the only way to make his nation safe is to fill it with more arms than any other nation, he should pay tribute to the strength of his land by showing a series of impressive shots of battleships, troops and aircraft, intercut to create an attractive tempo.

A great deal can be done with shadows on a plain wall, upon which silhouettes of map shapes can be shown to portray the vulnerable position of this nation, the strength of that nation, and so on, and I have managed to create the impression that hundreds of people are marching past, by a confused shadow of half a dozen pairs of feet.

Informative titles should accompany the parade of the forces, which tell of the position in 1914, and draw a comparison with to-day. However, there are two sides to a battleship, and even to a shell, and the other side is equally interesting. Therefore, the director should go down to fundamentals, and raise the question of whether armaments are, after all, the best means of ensuring peace. If they are, he can strengthen the case for them. If they are not, he can help to destroy it. How?

### Scenario Suggestions

One simple way is on a nursery floor, upon which two little boys are sprawling. Before each is a barrier. It can be a coal scuttle, an arm-chair or a sunshade. In close-ups, they peep suspiciously at each other, trying to find out what is hidden behind the barricades. One has a gun. Its nozzle is visible. The other gets a gun. The first boy therefore secures a second gun. So does the "enemy." The first boy, seeing two guns glaring at him, obtains a third. The "enemy" does likewise. Then a fourth, a fifth, and a sixth. Finally, after showing each boy in separate shots, they are seen surrounded by guns, and the temptation to fire them is overpowering. What a waste if they were never used at all. And so one boy fires, but it so happens that the other boy also fires—and they are both laid out, for the coal scuttle and the sunshade topple on to them. Neither knows who was the defender or the aggressor, but both have lost, or won.

Contrast that with two other boys—also lying on the floor. One is suspicious, and has surrounded himself with guns and forts, and the fender. The other is not suspicious at all. He sits unprotected, building with metal strips. He waves to his fierce neighbour, who scowls. The scowl fades as the war-minded boy watches the building grow higher and higher. He aims his guns at the contented unarmed boy, but cannot find a reason to fire. He is in no danger of being attacked. The unprotected boy is certainly not an enemy. Ultimately he accepts his neighbour's invitation to join him in building with the strips. Bunk! Maybe, but a point worth showing, and no greater bunk than the other two nations arming madly against each other. It raises the suggestion that a nation without any defence at all may be safer than one bristling with arms. No one has tried it yet, and so no one is qualified to damn the idea. Let the screen express it.

The juveniles can symbolise the international position, and they can be followed by a short, sharp sequence of placards—headlines—and posters: GERMANY ARMS—ITALY ON WAR BASIS—MILLIONS MORE FOR ARMY—NAVY—AIR DEFENCE, etc., etc., presented with rapidity. A title follows—*Which is the Enemy?* Every nation is, of every other nation—armaments for defence being interpreted abroad as weapons of aggression. A nation without arms is nobody's enemy, and the citizens of a neighbouring nation cannot be invited to war against it, or to defend themselves against a country which does not possess the means to attack.

### Subjects are limitless

You can portray the people of other nations in little cameos, quite simply, and contrast the activities of peace—industry—agriculture—shipping—with the cessation of all progress when war bursts forth—and you can show war vividly with a twopenny atlas. Tear the maps out, arrange them on the grass, and set a light to them. Feet march over them. Arms brandishing rifles rush across the screen—the flames on the burning maps rise higher—a head bends in sorrow—more feet—and then desolation—ashes—a darkening sky. Futility. Or, if you think otherwise, Honour, Glory, Freedom.

I can offer but the barest outline of an approach to such a subject, and am avoiding technicalities, for the purpose of this article is to establish a general method of dealing with subjects, which, at first sight, offer themselves to conventional treatment only. To seek the origin behind the contemporary event, and to dig down to the roots of things is the most fascinating task a film maker can set himself.

The subjects are limitless—there's the traffic problem, unemployment, housing—even the British film problem: all are suitable subjects for the amateur who wishes to express his views on the greatest of comedy-dramas—civilisation.

#### PRIMITIVES FOR F.S. BOOKING

The three primitives, *The Secret of a Queen*, *Le Bouquet de Violettes* and *Satan Finds Mischief*, are available for Film Society bookings through Cinema Contact Ltd., Oxford House, 9–15 Oxford Street, London, W.1. Made between 1904 and 1906, each is synchronised, and 1,500 feet in length.

* * *

Early films of historical value were discussed in "The Raw Material of Movie History" by A. Vesselo in our last issue. These are available through the National Film Library.

# *The Scottish Festival*

Fifty-three entries were received for Scotland's fourth Amateur Film Festival. This is the largest number ever received. Anthony Asquith adjudicated.

The prize for the most outstanding film went to Montagu Pictures, Newcastle-on-Tyne, for *The Day Thou Gavest*, an account of how God's day is spent by the cyclist, the hiker, the motorist, the churchgoer.

"Without any qualification, this is one of the best films of its kind I have ever had the pleasure of seeing," said Mr. Asquith.

Commenting on the high standard of the films in general, Mr. Asquith added that there was now no justification for the professionals' patronising attitude toward the amateur.

He warned amateurs, however, to stick more closely to subjects with which they were familiar, and to be more strong-willed when it came to cutting out shots for which they had a sentimental attachment but which did not mean much to the film as a whole.

The following were the awards:

VICTOR SAVILLE CUP for the most outstanding film: *The Day Thou Gavest* (Montagu Pictures, Newcastle-upon-Tyne).

BUCHANAN CUP for the best film combining drama with realism: *This England* (Godiva Film Group, Coventry).

FICTION FILMS. *Amateur Cine World* Prize, £10: *This England*.

NON-FICTION FILMS. *World Film News* Prize, £5, for Clubs: *The Day Thou Gavest*. A. B. King Prize, £5 5*s*., for individuals: *Another Happy Day* (T. Lawrenson, Dundee).

ANY TYPE OF FILM made by a resident in Scotland. *Glasgow Evening News* and *Daily Record* Prize, £10 (Equal): *Creels* (J. H. Lorimer, Dundee), *Hell Unlimited* (Norman Maclaren and Helen Biggar, Glasgow), *Fourth in Hand* (Meteor Society, Glasgow).

BEST COLOUR FILM. *Sight and Sound* Prize, £10 10*s*. (Equal): *The Road to the Isles* (M. B. Anderson, Newton Mearns), *The Highlands of Scotland* (W. D. Jelfs, Glasgow), *Presentation of the Colours* (J. E. Davies, Wembley).

NOVICES. Fiction: *Just One Thing After Another* (F. M. Marshall, Glasgow). Non-Fiction: *Monty Meets Disaster* (A. G. Greaves, Newcastle). Resident in Scotland: *Symphony of Nature* (D. Mackenzie, Hamilton).

The adjudicator gave a warning against a facile impressionism resulting in films which are often surprisingly brilliant, beautifully photographed and ingeniously cut, but which, when all is said, seldom get beneath the surface. Realism in subject must be accompanied by realism of purpose. *Hell Unlimited* was the only film whose directors approached their subject in this manner. For this reason (discounting its conclusion) this film was the most successful as it was the most ambitious of the entries.

The Scottish Festival proved, he thought, that amateurs are well on the way to meeting the professionals on their own ground so far as technique goes. With a more careful analysis, more ruthless scissors, and a surer realisation of the drama beneath the surface of everyday life they will soon be producing films which will be a worthy contribution to the cinema and the community.

The main fault of the story films was that they were not sufficiently dramatic. Certainly they dealt with exciting things—murder, suicide, death rays and every kind of violence. The characters to whom these thrilling things happened, however, were ciphers, and no one minded what happened to a cipher.

"As soon as you believe in a person on the screen," said Mr. Asquith, "you are interested in what happens to him." That was why he thought *This England* the best of the fiction films. Simply and charmingly it told a believable story about conceivable people.

The merit of the Meteor Society's *Fourth in Hand* was its neatness of construction. Its makers had known what to put in and what to leave out. Amateur films too often elaborated details and left major points in obscurity.

Of so great interest were the documentaries that Mr. Asquith had difficulty in making a choice. *Creels*, J. H. Lorimer's film of Scottish fishing life on the East coast, was illuminatingly shot and constructed. *Hell Unlimited*, by Norman Maclaren and Helen Biggar, showed imagination in the use of models and was quickly and imaginatively cut.

# Amateur Crown Challenged

The title "King of Amateurs," given by WORLD FILM NEWS to "Pop" Burnford (in a recent article), has been challenged.

T. Lawrenson, of Dundee, maker of three Child pictures, and winner of the *Daily Mail* International trophy, claims first place among amateurs the world over.

His first film won the gold medal in a Home Movies competition in 1934. Following that on two successive years he won the *Daily Mail* International trophy. He secured in 1935 a first place in an American competition.

This year he won a prize for his most recent film *Another Happy Day*, at the Scottish Amateur Film Festival.

"When I first became interested in cinematography," said Mr. Lawrenson in a letter to *W.F.N.*, "I felt there was no reason why the standard of 'Child' pictures should be inferior to that of any other type of documentary, and I decided to do what I could in the matter. In this I can claim no small measure of success, as all three of such films I have made, have been suitably recognised."

When he was twelve he received a School of Art part time scholarship and studied until he was fifteen, when he began work as a nautical instrument maker. He made ships' compasses, etc., with a firm on Tyneside.

Eight years ago he began his present occupation, as a magazine illustrator with a Dundee firm. He took up film making, he said, "as a means of satisfying my desire to create something which, besides being artistic, would be an outlet for my practical capabilities."

Mr. Lawrenson finds editing intensely interesting and believes he owes most of his success to his ability as a cutter. He gives great care to the preparation of his scripts, making rough sketches of each shot in most cases and paying a good deal of heed to continuity.

The child (Mr. Lawrenson's small son) is a charming child, charmingly presented. Great patience must have been used in getting each shot, and the child played up to the filming very well. It is easily seen that Mr. Lawrenson loved his subject, catching as he did the child's changing moods, from laughter over a new toy, to a crying spell at bedtime.

**" Another Happy Day "**

# NEWS FROM AMATEUR CLUBS

**ACE MOVIES.** Hon. Sec. Channon Wood, 15 Openview, S.W.18; Studio: 90 High Street Mews, Wimbledon, S.W.

*Luna Park* has reached final stages of production and the next two productions are in course of preparation. One will be an adaptation of a famous medieval legend which Ace Movies has had under consideration for over five years. A solution to certain technical difficulties has now been found, but the cast is not yet finally selected. Direction will be in the capable hands of Clifford West, director of *Driftwood*, and photography in charge of Ben Carleton, better known for his directorial activities but whose practical camera experience is wide. Settings will be from original designs by Maurice Fowler who was responsible for the settings in *Three Floors Up*, *Marionetti* and *Luna Park*. The last two films have not yet been generally seen but the settings in the first have received unstinted praise from critics.

This new production is the most ambitious Ace Movies has undertaken. It is hoped that with the finished film Ace Movies will set a new and higher standard in amateur film play production. A certain nervousness is felt, however, as the subject is one that calls for great sincerity in treatment and which, if successful will be a triumph, if it misses fire will be—a flop. Particulars of the title and legend are therefore withheld for the present.

The title of the second production in course of preparation has not yet been finally decided but it is a modern crime story from a rather unusual angle. Channon Wood will direct.

Both films will require large casts and applications for membership are invited. A vacancy also occurs for a cameraman with own 16 mm. camera.

**BECKENHAM CINE SOCIETY:** Secretary, Miss M. Davies, 105 Clockhouse Road.

Activities : Lectures by well-known men are being given on technical matters.

Film shows and talks are being given to other clubs and societies in the district, and members of these organisations are invited to the studio, theatre and club room so that they can see what is being done.

Outings and entertainments are arranged for members. On March 8th a large party attended the Whitehall Cine Society's Exhibition. On March 6th, a dance was held for members and their friends, during which filming took place at intervals: the shots thus obtained will be connected with other shots of local interest. The resulting film will be shown to the people of Beckenham and District. Arrangements have also been made for several cars to take members to North Wales during the Easter holidays, when it is hoped that a film in natural colour will be made.

The members meet regularly every Tuesday evening. The Secretary would be pleased to forward invitation tickets to any of the meetings to anybody who is interested in cine work.

**CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY.** During January the C.F.S. gave 24 shows. The display at Ilford Town Hall on March 15th completed the Suburban Town Hall series, which has included Lewisham, Finsbury and Battersea. The success of these independent shows has been such that arrangements are being made for other local town halls this season and all the bookings will be repeated next year. *Aran of the Saints* and *The Holy Mass*, the latter with commentary, have been the chief features of these programmes.

The Society's last production, *Just for Today* is being followed by *The Man Who Feared Children*, and a film dealing with the position of Catholic Youth in Industrialism to-day. Mr. Terence McArdle (recent winner of *Amateur Cine World* competition) is directing the latter.

The C.F.S. has a catalogue of 8 mm. films in preparation and full particulars may be had from the Hon. Assistant Secretary, 36 Great Smith Street.

Those members of the C.F.S. who have not yet paid their subscriptions for 1937 are reminded that these are now overdue and should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer, 36 Great Smith Street.

**ELTHAM CINE SOCIETY** held a Gala Night on March 19 to celebrate progress since its inauguration two years ago, when it consisted of a few enthusiasts, very little apparatus and no headquarters. Two members of the Society have constructed recording equipment with satisfactory results, and work has begun on a sound film, to be made in Kodachrome and disc-synchronised. By means of gearing, the camera can be coupled to the disc recorder, thus ensuring faithful synchronisation, and the projector may be coupled in a similar manner. The new production is a version of the fairy story *The Emperor's New Clothes*, and costumes and scenery have been designed by H. McCready, a member of the Society and an illustrator of fairy books. A small group have been busy at the studio constructing a 35 mm. sound projector, which should shortly be ready for use.

The Club will hold its Annual Dinner on Saturday, April 10. All applications for full or associate membership should be made to the Acting Hon. Secretary: Miss V. D. White, 36 Craigton Road, Eltham, S.E.9.

**KINGSTON CINE CLUB** was formed a little over a year ago, and now has 30 members. It recently opened some new studios in Kingston, with an up-to-date lighting plant of considerable power, enabling the filming of comparatively large scenes. The studio has four different types of wall decoration, so that sets are permanently in position. There are drawing-room, hall, library and dining-room sets, together with a glass side to the studio which can be used for factory workshops, draughtsmen's offices, artists' studios, etc. The lighting consists of a large main overhead reflector containing lights giving 5,000 watts. This reflector is mounted on a movable frame which can be wheeled to any part of the studio, and is adjustable for height. There is also a series of side floods, spot lights and rifles. Lamps are connected by Cab Tyre cable to a main distributing organ. This is fitted with two sub-main switches and fuses, each feeding four switch sockets and engaging with two pin plugs from the lamp leads. Cab Tyre cable carries the mains through two leads to the organ, which is in the charge of the assistant electrician. The head electrician is responsible for the position of lights in conjunction with the cameramen, as three sizes of films are taken simultaneously—8 mm., 9.5 mm. and 16 mm. Two evenings have been devoted to the first indoor production, which is one of four "Quickies" to be produced so as to form a small library of films as soon as possible.

Owing to the insufficient number of women members for casting purposes, the ladies' subscription has been fixed at 15*s*. per annum instead of the usual 30*s*. All applications should be made to the Hon. Secretary, 24 Sandhurst Avenue, Surbiton.

**THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY** Kinematograph Section held its Annual General Meeting on Thursday, March 18. The report of the Joint Hon. Secretaries indicated considerable progress during the year and a gratifying increase in membership.

The meetings covered a wide variety of subjects, including studio lighting, colour films, editing, cartoons, modern laboratory practice and sound recording, while on the amateur side a series of representative films were shown.

During the year, the 35 mm. projector was equipped for sound by Sound Installation Services Ltd., and Messrs. Kodak presented to the Society 16 mm. and 8 mm. projectors and a screen.

Four sub-committees were formed during the year. The first, dealing with the Kinematograph Exhibition and Sub-Standard Film Competition, staged in December a comprehensive display of stills and apparatus. In the competition, no fewer than 38 films were accepted, and one really outstanding natural-history film was awarded a plaque, struck to the designs of Bertram Cox, F.R.P.S. The Board of Judges included, in addition to Society members, Miss Mary Field (now a member), F. Pullin and R. Herring.

The Kinematograph Section of the Photographic Exhibition is in future to be included in the Kinematograph Exhibition.

Sub-Committee "B" made considerable progress in regard to co-ordination with Trade Societies. The Association of Cine Technicians is now affiliated with the R.P.S., and the Guild of Projectionists has applied for affiliation.

The chief work of Sub-Committee "C" has been the inauguration of a Federation of Kinematograph Societies, in which twenty leading amateur societies are actively interested. A Joint Panel with the British Film Institute, to investigate a proposal for the production by amateurs of films for charities and other organisations, has been formed.

Sub-Committee "D" was responsible for publicity and propaganda.

The next meeting of the Kine Section is to be held at 35 Russell Square, on Friday, April 23, at 7 p.m. A further selection of films awarded certificates in the Sub-Standard Film Competition will be shown, and T. A. Glover, A.R.P.S., F.R.G.S., will talk on his experiences while filming location shots in Africa, and will show selections from his films, including, it is hoped, *Song of Freedom*.

Tickets may be obtained from the Joint Secretary, R. Howard Cricks, F.R.P.S., 159 Wardour Street, London, W.1.

# MUSIC

## *Notes and Theories by Leslie Perkoff*

I

In recent years the significant thing about the film industry has been its growing attraction for those creative individuals in letters and music. In the case of letters, events have given some glaring examples of the fallacy of expecting writers who are competent in the technique of novel writing and even the drama necessarily to make competent scenarists. The same point can be made about composers: those musicians with an orthodox grasp of their art who do not necessarily see their work in film composition with a cinematic perspective.

In the film medium with all its essentials that make for synthesis, the problem of music is a difficult one when antiquated methods of providing clumsy and mostly noisy symphonic backgrounds still persist.

Music being an abstract art, it is particularly difficult to assess its proper relationship to the unity of a film. To elucidate this, one must sift the various rôles of music in film production. Its superficial yet nevertheless important use is in its adherence to the story development when a crooner gets over his number as in a Bing Crosby opus or when Grace Moore satisfies the demands of her public with the aid of some operatic fragments. Much of the music in a film like *Dreaming Lips* can be placed in this category despite a comparative highbrow appeal. Here the music is inevitably bound up with the plot and thus patterned according to the nature of the film. Moreover, in this case it presents no undue complexity for the musician who is engaged in co-ordinating the score. His scope here is limited in a way, and the demands on what cinematic feeling he may possess, are small.

II

Music in its most profound use in the cinema must be in its rôle as an integral part of the cinematic scheme, in creating atmosphere and in developing emotional content. The success of this depends chiefly on the composer's willingness and initiative to throw overboard many of his orthodox methods of composition in the same way that the novelist-turned-scenarist might have to give up lengthy polemics and descriptive embellishments for the economic *tempo* of film. Realising the possibilities in this medium, it is not too much to assert that the composer must assume and demand as important a status in the making of a film as the art director, the editor and even the dialogue writer. Viewing his work as something incidental and not integral, it is understandable why he will be less concerned with using style and method than with drawing his fees.

III

While one can understand and analyse the technical progress in such branches of the cinema so native to its very existence as photography, editing and montage, music still remains a spurious and neglected child. Nevertheless, from much good work in film composition and tentative attempts to prove that it is more than a mere accessory to a production, it should be possible to formulate certain theories about its possibilities and appropriate function.

IV

It cannot but be ultimately accepted that the use of sound effects and even the kind of music entirely divorced from the laws of composition, can be heightened to a definite art of its own; in point of fact, an art which could be practised by a versatile and conscientious director or scenarist with some basic knowledge of music. In discussing this therefore, can we place such exploitation of sound in the category of music and term the co-ordinating brain behind it a composer? Since music is but the science of sound and craftsmen without labels may tend to get lost in the vortex of a studio, it remains a matter of convenience and even necessity to couple sound effects with music.

V

Fritz Lang's *Dr. Mabuse* presents in many of its sequences an outstanding example of how sound effects have enhanced the emotional appeal and unity of a film. Dealing with psychological material, such a film lends itself best to the horizontal line of sound where the mind can assimilate with greater clarity the association of melodic sound and certain moods. Thus where a series of *timpani* beats or a sustained note of a wind instrument might achieve certain results with the minimum of effort, the vertical system of harmony as used in the symphonic sphere might neutralise the cumulative result as conceived by producer and director. (Sound, however, could be used even harmonically and contrapuntally, but not necessarily within the symphonic sphere and orthodox laws of composition.)

That the co-ordinating brain of Lang was responsible to a large degree for the sound effects in *Dr. Mabuse*, is more or less certain on account of the fact that his latest film *Fury* had an unmistakably similar treatment of sound effects. This in spite of the fact that Franz Waxman wrote the score.

VI

Ruling out the elements of charlatanry and private codes as practised by some modern poets, poetry embraces the treatment of images and the presentation of ideas and moods through this medium. Further, the success of poetry rests on the relationship of images to one another; in other words, relevance, form and rhythm. Similar principles can be applied to the use of sound in a film. The film medium, however, more dynamic than any form of literature, imparts its messages to the consciousness by the basis of photographic statement. That we must take as being the process of building up an idea, but the more complex operations in building up an appeal to the senses, call upon the uses of sound effects to give significance and continuity to various scenes.

The film editor, we know, strives to give smoothness to the scheme of action, to find some photographic link between two different scenes or even detail shots. A similar and as difficult a task must devolve on the individual responsible for sound. For example, the possible sound application in giving rhythm and mental colour to two totally different scenes:

| *Scene* | *Scene* |
|---|---|
| Fade out lake at night. | Fade in early morning at noisy station. |
| *Resolution of the bridge between night and early morning: A low note ascending to a high pitch.* | |
| Photographic statement of the faint momentum of dark water. | Momentum of hurrying people, newsvendors, porters. |
| *Association and blending of momenta: A soft arpeggio increasing in volume and taking on a new rhythmical stridency.* | |

The composer taking such guiding theories as the basis for his work in this particular instance, must then proceed to give shape to his material; in other words, to create an element of synthesis within the general synthesis.

Hugh Leslie Perkoff:
Formerly on the editorial staff of the *Sunday Referee* and later a music critic for some time for that paper. In recent times a contributor to *News Review*. Has recently left for Vienna to act as a foreign correspondent.

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# *The Vulgar Film in Lilac-Scented Cambridge*

By Arthur Elton

ONCE upon a time it was easy to weed out enthusiasts from among the dozens who were looking for work in documentary. One asked, "Have you ever taken your enthusiasm to the practical point of making a substandard film?" And ninety-nine out of a hundred jobseekers faded away. But things have changed since then.

Ask that question to-day at a Cambridge Society, and three-quarters of the members—dons, fellows, lecturers, graduates, undergraduates, exhibitioners, freshmen, rowing men, racing men, nothing-in-particular men (and women)—answer by producing 16 mm. spools from their pockets in dozens.

Five years ago a flowing tie, a year's subscription to the London Film Society, and proof that you had seen *Potemkin* at least twice was sufficient: you could claim a place beside Grierson, Flaherty and Pudovkin.

To-day the *dilletante* has almost disappeared. In his place, men and women fit up their bedrooms with substandard rewinders, cover their writing tables with draft scenarios and turn local hospitals and laboratories into locations. Lecturers to Cambridge film enthusiasts at question time are asked, not what they think of Eisenstein's montage, but how much does film cost; which is the best camera and who does the best developing.

## Vitamins, Clouds, Gliders

At the moment at Cambridge, men and women are making films instead of talking about other people's. A film on vitamins is just being finished. A film on ribbon development is planned. One man is recording cloud structure, another is co-operating in a film on gliders.

Co-ordinating all these activities is CAMBRIDGE FILM PRODUCTIONS, an undergraduate society with backing from the livelier fellows to ensure continuity. Its first film—*Psychology To-day*—has just appeared. Though it has its weaknesses, it is a creditable job. The film tries to put briefly and in *March of Time* style the theory and practice of psychology. As one would expect, the parts dealing with practice, that is, the achievements of industrial psychologists and the like, are much better than the sections dealing with theory. Cambridge Film Productions would be well advised to stick to the presentation of objective fact, at any rate for the present. An arty sequence in slow motion of someone running up and down stairs, intended to illustrate the mechanism of the dream, is not to be commended.

The film is unfortunately spoiled by its commentary, verbosely written in the style of a second-rate text book, and spoken too fast in a high squeaky voice. Rumour says—we hope without truth—that the commentator is to be explained by the fact that when £30 was urgently needed to complete production someone offered to put up the money. And the price? The price, it is reputed, was that the someone should speak the commentary.

And now for wider issues. With young intelligent Cambridge making films (many enthusiasts give up their vacations for it) one would expect the governing bodies of the University to back them. Is not there here the opportunity to bring the scientific and social achievements of the world to the lecture rooms and laboratories?

Though Cambridge's individual contributions to science and learning are great, its general standards of internal teaching are low. Shield the young mind from knowledge of the world to-day is the unspoken moral of half the representatives of the various bodies who govern the various triposes.

## The Vulgar World

Quavering behind the silver and plate of high tables, sniffing behind the snuff boxes, mincing up dark passages to scholarly sitting rooms, teetering round the quadrangles, the out-of-date academe makes his influence felt in every laboratory and lecture room in the University.

Films? Films belong to the outside vulgar world and not to lilac-scented Cambridge. The makers of *Psychology To-day* wanted to show their film at the psychology school (which has a sound projector), many of whose members had actively co-operated in production. Did the authorities who decide these things say, "Our students should see this film. It may be bad. It may be good. But it ought to be seen—and encouraged." Of course not. They deliberated and then prosily decided that its showing was inconsistent with the aims of student education.

Lots of Cambridge schools are fitted with sound projectors. Are they used? Very little. Can they be used out of lecture hours for others to show films? No. Is there some legal or licensing reason why not? No. Why are they not so used? Ask the question in Latin, and you may get an answer, if you are lucky.

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**OXFORD FILM SOCIETY:** A successful season ended with a programme on March 7th featuring *Niemansland*, an anti-war propaganda film produced in Germany in 1932. Directed by Victor Trivas, it sets out to show the stupidity, rather than the horror of war, by stressing the natural fraternity of soldiers of various nationalities brought together in 'No Man's Land'. *Niemansland* was shown in London during the end of 1932 under the title of *War is Hell*. The supporting programme included Rotha's *Contact*, Holmes' *Medieval Village*, and *How to Sleep* by Robert Benchley, dramatic critic of the *New Yorker*.

The Society is holding a short summer season during May and the earlier part of June. All enquiries should be sent to E. F. Bowtell, Hon. Secretary, 105 Victoria Road, Oxford.

**DEVON AND EXETER FILM SOCIETY:** Although newly formed, all membership vacancies have been filled. Activities have begun with a short season of international films, including *Shipyard*, *Kameradschaft*, *Night on the Bare Mountain* and *Le Dernier Milliardaire*. A full programme is being arranged for next winter, when the Society hopes to extend its activities in various directions. Hon. Secretary: H. W. Morgan, University College of the South West of England, Exeter.

# Film Society News

**THE LONDON FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY** carried on its vigorous tradition on Sunday, March 7th, when it showed the only remaining copy of Fritz Lang's *Siegfried*. In support was the première of the new G.P.O. film, *Calendar of the Year*, a new G.B. film *Fish Face*, by Mary Field, and *Rainbow Dance* by Len Lye.

A record number attended and the Society now has a membership of over four hundred. Apart from its Sunday film shows the Society does much other work, such as shows of amateur films on week-day nights, visits to specialist cinemas at reduced prices and the issuing of a guide to all the happenings in London in connection with films.

At present it is aiming to establish branch societies in most London suburbs, and to this end two such societies at Sudbury and Wimbledon have already affiliated. Through this means they get membership subscriptions at reduced rates.

**THE FILM SOCIETY OF GLASGOW:** Chairman: C. A. Oakley; Hon. Secretary: D. Paterson Walker, 127 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, C.2.

At the eighth meeting on March 14th, *Thunderbolt Express*, a Mack Sennett film of 1930, and *The Old King and the Young King*, with Emil Jannings, were the principal films. A Fischinger short and *In the Land of the Red Blanket*, an Africa Film Production, were also in the programme.

The Glasgow Film Society has recently attempted to find out the preferences of its members by the use of printed slips bearing the names of films shown. The slips are issued with the programmes and members are asked to express their likes and dislikes. The Society's last show is on April 4th, when they will revive *Maskerade* and *The Slump is Over*. On April 11th, Mr. Paul Rotha will lecture and show some of his most recent films.

**WEST ESSEX FILM SOCIETY:** The affiliation of this Club to the Royal Photographic Society is likely to be effected through the new "Kine Federation," which is to be accepted into the Photographic Alliance. The Society has already become affiliated to the London Film Institute Society, thus affording it advantages of British Film Institute membership.

At the January monthly meeting, B. Salt, of Gaumont-British Instructional, lectured on cartoon films, showing three he had made himself. At the technical meeting on February 10th, E. J. Chard, of Cinecraft Supplies, Ltd., gave a lecture on titling, accompanied by an exhibition of a large selection of titling apparatus and films illustrating the various points covered.

The making of short films on industries is of particular appeal to the Society, and some of the members have recently completed a film for the Mortlock Sterilised Milk Supply Co. Ltd., of Manor Park.

At a discussion held last month it was suggested that future productions should include a number of educational shorts. The proposal was met with approval, and a sub-committee was appointed to undertake the work of organisation. The Hon. Secretary is F. J. Philpott, 7 Wellington Road, East Ham, E.6.

## *Film Society News*

**SUDBURY FILM SOCIETY:** Two films by members were entered in the Scottish Film Festival this year. One of these—*The Presentation of the Colours by King Edward VIII*—received an award, and the Hon. Anthony Asquith, who adjudicated, remarked that this film was better than anything produced by the newsreel companies. It was filmed in colour by J. E. Davies.

A programme of films and gramophone records was recently given to members at the H.M.V. Co. In another meeting of the Society a demonstration of television was successfully carried out.

In addition to the projection evenings, some time is spent in production, and a new colour film, *Zero Hour*, is nearing completion.

The Hon. Secretary of this Society is Bertram P. Tyrer, 9 Cranleigh Gardens, Kenton, Middlesex.

**EDINBURGH FILM GUILD:** The eighth performance on March 7th was arranged to illustrate the ways in which music can be used on the screen. The principal film shown was *The Unfinished Symphony*, the story of Schubert. Further illustrations of the cinematic use of music were presented in *Metropolitan Nocturne* and in *The Band Concert*, and also in *In der Nacht*, *William Tell Overture* and *Kaleidoscope*. After the show a discussion on Music and the Film was held in the Caledonian Hotel. Mr. Guy Warrack was among the guests.

**STIRLINGSHIRE FILM SOCIETY**, which has now about 200 members, has had a successful first season.

There have been five Sunday performances in the Regent Cinema, Bannockburn, and among the feature films have been *Maskerade*, *So Ended a Great Love*, *L'Atalante*, *La Crise est Finie*, and *M.* Two programmes, one of G.B. Instructionals and one of G.P.O. films, were also shown.

On December 8th, 1936, Mr. John Grierson addressed the Society on "Scottish Films and the Empire Exhibition"; and, on February 8th, Mr. Harry Watt spoke on "Documentary Films."

**NORTH LONDON FILM SOCIETY:** The chief feature of the meeting held on March 15th at the David Lewis Theatre was *Der Schimmelreiter* ("The Rider on the White Horse"), directed by Curt Oetel and Hans Deppe, and adapted from one of the most impressive of the many Friesland legends. Among the other films shown were *Lobsters*, a cleverly conceived study by John Mathias and L. Moholy-Nagy; *And So to Work*, an original comedy of early morning English life by Dr. Massingham; *Musical Abstract*, a Fischinger cartoon, and a three-minute French film *Pacific Problems*.

**CAITHNESS FILM SOCIETY:** Active in both the spheres of production and projection, this Society has taken over a disused laundry as studio and club room. A "house warming" party, included a showing of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. Production on 16 mm. has begun. Once the studio is fully equipped, work will commence on another film depicting life in a Caithness croft. The past work of the Society has been mainly devoted to documentaries and records of local events. Hon. Secretary: J. W. P. Flint, Esq., Sumburgh, Hill Avenue, Wick.

# *The Work—and the Worries—of the London Film Society*

### (A reply to Dr. P. A. Gorer)

A LETTER by P. A. Gorer to the Editor of *W.F.N.* published in our last issue raises a number of interesting points concerning the functions and administration of the Film Society.

(1) *Mr. Gorer asks whether it is the object of the Society to amuse or to uplift.* As an organisation whose performances are exempt from Entertainments Tax on account of their educational value the Society is naturally concerned to maintain its tradition of providing an opportunity not otherwise available for the study of valuable technical and æsthetic experiments in the film. The medium selected is in itself a negation of the theory which regards education as incompatible with amusement.

(2) *What is the basis on which films are selected? Does rarity play any part in the choice? Does a bad Japanese film stand a better chance than a good American film on the ground that Japanese films are of sufficient interest to be shown apart from merit?*—Rarity does play an important part in the Society's choice of programmes, since it is one of its main principles to show films not otherwise accessible in this country. The fact that Japanese films may be bad from our point of view does not make it less interesting to know what the Japanese themselves regard as good and how they employ the medium of the screen. A "bad" Japanese film that cannot otherwise be seen does therefore stand a better chance to be included than a "good" American film that can be seen in commercial cinemas.

### Selection

(3) *Who selects the Society's programmes?* The Society makes it a point that, wherever possible, films submitted should be viewed by at least three council members. This obviously implies that the films can be seen in this country. The possibility of importing a copy for the purpose of viewing it in bond depends entirely on the financial resources of the Society, or, in other words, on the size of its membership. The cost of doing so varies from £15 to £20 for each feature film. Even so this course is invariably adopted, when a favourable or even a doubtful report has been received from a council member who has seen a particular film abroad.

But it is obvious that with its present resources the Society must be guided by the opinion of the council member sent abroad for the special purpose of viewing films, if his verdict is unequivocally negative. This is undoubtedly unfortunate, but the remedy lies with an increase in the membership which will make it financially possible to send more than one member abroad for the purpose of film selection.

(4) *Why not more revivals of good American films? Is the reason æsthetic or technical?*—The reasons are purely technical: (*a*) In almost every case all copies of such films have been scrapped by the renters after the general release; (*b*) to reprint a copy at the Society's expense is far more costly than to show an English or Continental film the copy of which is supplied by the owners; (*c*) even where the Society desires to obtain and pay for a reprint the American renters often refuse its request on the grounds that they might themselves consider a reissue at some later date (it should be remembered that the American renters, not being interested in Film Society releases, are little inclined to meet it in matters outside their usual business routine).

There remains, however, the wider problem whether in view of the changing standards of American and Continental production there is still a sufficient supply of interesting technical or æsthetic experimental films not available for commercial or other reasons to the general public. That there was such a supply in the past, that moreover the activities of the Society have been of vital importance not merely in the growth of the repertory cinema movement, but also in raising the general quality of commercial films, cannot for one moment be doubted. The list of feature films shown by the Society since its formation is sufficiently impressive as evidence for the services rendered by the Film Society. Many of those films were never, or only under exceptional conditions, publicly exhibited. Even if the feature films shown during the present season are examined from this point of view, only one will be found that might justly be regarded as a stop-gap. *The New Gulliver*, *Hortobagy*, *La Tendre Ennemie*, *We from Kronstadt*, all fully attained the Film Society standard of technical or æsthetic interest.

But what are the prospects that this state of affairs will continue in the future? In the first place it should be remembered that even if the supply from many Continental sources may continue to be disappointing, there is every reason to expect a considerable increase in the number of Russian films that will shortly be available. An impressive list of films scheduled for release during the Twentieth Anniversary of the October Revolution this year will illustrate the new achievements both of the old and of the rising generation of Russian directors. With the difficulties of language and content it is unlikely that many of these films will obtain a public showing in this country.

### Pioneer Work

As long as there is creative originality left in the cinema, there will always of necessity be experimental pioneer work, unsuitable for the commercial screen. This will remain true, however much the quality of the commercial film will increase (and no one can tell whether that increase will not at some time or other be checked by social events beyond the control of the film world, as was the case in Germany). And it is just in this sphere that the most important function of the Film Society is to be found. In an art in which the creative worker must have exceptional resources of vital energy to maintain his integrity and to assert his claims in a whirlpool of conflicting commercial and political interests, an audience interested in his creative problems as such and willing to act as a sounding-board for his experiments is of the greatest value to him. Whether the Film Society will continue to be able worthily to fulfil this function depends entirely on the loyalty of its members and the vigour of its Council.

M. A. T.

## Film Society News (*contd.*)

**MANCHESTER AND SALFORD WORKERS' FILM SOCIETY:** The programme given at the Rivoli Cinema on Sunday, March 14th, was headed by *Le Loup Garou*, a study of the fear and grim terror that grips the victim of a chase when the game is up. It is directed by Friedrich Feher, who was also responsible for *Robber Symphony*. Also shown were George Pal's *Ether Symphony* and Rotha's *Chapter and Verse*. The last show of the season will be on April 11th, and will include *West Front* 1918 (Pabst); *Moscow*, a French puppet film; and some German Gasparcolor abstracts. Hon. Secretary: T. Cavanagh, Esq., 86 Halton Street, Salford, 5.

**IPSWICH FILM SOCIETY.** Following illustrated lectures by Edgar Anstey and Basil Wright, the Ipswich Film Society has shown *The Song of Ceylon*, *West Front* 1918, *Hey Rup! Wings Over Everest*, *Turksib* and *Bonne Chance!* Activities during April include an illustrated lecture by Stuart Legg on "Film Technique" and the presentation of *Contact* and *En Natt*. The society is also planning to hold additional performances for children.

**THE METEOR FILM PRODUCING SOCIETY** of Glasgow was awarded first prize in Class C (Any Type of Film, Open to Amateurs Resident in Scotland) of the Scottish Amateur Film Festival. Their film, *Fourth in Hand*, tied for the award with James H. Lorimer of Dundee's documentary *Creels*, and the propaganda film, *Hell, UnLtd.* of the Glasgow School of Art Group.

*Fourth in Hand* had its première at a party held in Society's Studios on an evening during the week preceding the Festival. About 70 guests were present, including Harry Gordon and other prominent stage, radio and newspaper personalities.

Three leading members of the Society were invited to broadcast on the Young Scots programme of the Scottish Regional: the subject of their talk was "How a Film is Produced." The three members were Ian S. Ross, Jack Robertson, Jr., Secretary and President respectively of the Amateur Cinematography Panel of the Scottish Film Council, and James C. Hastie, producer and founder of Glasgow's famous amateur repertory, The Curtain Theatre.

*Fourth in Hand* may be hired from programme secretary, Ian S. Ross, 80 Buchanan Street, Glasgow, C.1, for 6 shillings silent or 10 shillings with records.

> One of these days business will have to reconcile itself to the fact that it is selling to the middle-aged, and that a considerable number of the middle-aged may be put off buying a lipstick, or a roadster (or a film) if it is constantly advertised as peculiarly suitable to the bright lads and even brighter hoydens of about 17. The age limit in the advertisements will have to rise. We are all willing to cut off five years or maybe ten, but what we want to see in the advertisements are men and women not too overwhelmingly different from ourselves.
>
> —Gilbert Seldes, *Esquire*

# B.B.C. Events

Thursday, April 1st, 7.45 p.m.: *Chocolate Soldier*. Musical comedy. Production: McConnel. NATIONAL. ★ 8 p.m. Feature programme. *April Fool's Day*. Production: Felton. REGIONAL.

Friday, April 2nd, 8.0 p.m.: Opera. *Fanal*, Act 2. Relayed from Sweden. REGIONAL.

Saturday, April 3rd, 7.30 p.m.: *In Town Tonight*. Production: Hanson. NATIONAL.

★Sunday, April 4th, 9.5 p.m.: *The Cherry Orchard*. By Tchekov. Production: Gielgud. NATIONAL.

Monday, April 5th, 8.20 p.m.: Harry Hopeful. *Trough of Bowland*. Production: Bridson. NORTH REGIONAL. 9.35 p.m.: *I Made You Possible*. By Ivor Brown. Production: Burnham. NATIONAL.

Tuesday, April 6th, 8.0 p.m.: *The Girl Behind the Counter*. Musical comedy. Production: Campbell. NATIONAL.

Wednesday, April 7th, 8.15 p.m.: Concert from Queen's Hall. Bach, Beethoven, Brahms. Conductor: Boult. NATIONAL. 9.30 p.m.: Amateur Boxing. Commentary from Albert Hall. REGIONAL.

★Thursday, April 8th, 7.30 p.m.: *Die Meistersinger*, Act 2. Relayed from Berlin State Opera House. REGIONAL. 9.0 p.m.: Feature programme. *Warren Hastings*. Production: Gilliam. REGIONAL.

Saturday, April 10th, 7.30 p.m.: *A.B.C.* Edition One. Devised by Alec Heath. Production: Hanson. NATIONAL.

Sunday, April 11th, 6.30 p.m.: *The Table Under the Tree*. Production: Hanson. NATIONAL.

Tuesday, April 13th, 7.30 p.m.: *His Father's Sword*. By Anthony Ellis. Production: Creswell. REGIONAL.

Wednesday, April 14th, 7.45 p.m.: B.B.C. Symphony Concert. Beethoven, Mozart, Sibelius, Wagner. Conductor: Boult. NATIONAL.

Friday, April 16th, 7.15 p.m.: *Wireless Puppets*. Production: Wylie. NATIONAL. ★8.15 p.m.: Feature programme. *Ratcliffe Highway*. Production: Morrow. NATIONAL.

Saturday, April 17th, 7.55 p.m.: Opera. *Blue Beard's Castle*. By Bartok. Relayed from Budapest. REGIONAL.

Sunday, April 18th, 7.15 p.m.: *Three Women*. By Katherine Mansfield. Production: Allen. NATIONAL.

Monday, April 19th, 8.0 p.m.: *Othello*, Acts 1 and 2. From Covent Garden. REGIONAL. 9.45 p.m.: Acts 3 and 4. NATIONAL.

Tuesday, April 20th, 8.0 p.m.: *The Second Round*. By Sapper. Production: Sieveking. NATIONAL.

★Friday, April 23rd, 2.15 p.m.: Shakespeare Birthday Luncheon. Speeches from Stratford-on-Avon. NATIONAL. 7.30 p.m.: Feature programme. *King Arthur*. Production: Gielgud.

Sunday, April 25th, 6.15 p.m.: *Trojan Women*. By Gilbert Murray. Production: Burnham. NATIONAL.

Monday, April 26th, 9.35 p.m.: *Almonds and Raisins*. Yiddish variety. NATIONAL. 8.0 p.m.: *Ariane et Barbe Bleu*. Acts 1 and 2. From Covent Garden. REGIONAL. 10.35 p.m.: Act 3. NATIONAL.

Wednesday, April 28th, 5.30 p.m.: Feature programme. *Cricket*. NATIONAL. 8.0 p.m.: *East Lynne*. Production: Gilliam. NATIONAL

# *Radio . . . Schools . . .*
# *Open Casement on the World*

THERE IS A strange feeling that radio has slipped into the schools on the skirts of the mandarins, very like a little boy into a football match. But just as that urchin becomes the most vocal of enthusiasts on the other side of the turnstiles so may radio become first voice in the re-orientation of education. To that end it must choose its own text and matter, of a stuff more vital and enduring than the teaching of Magna Charta, and the hibernation of hedgehogs.

Several points in the current programme of Broadcast to Schools 1936–37 flatter the hope that such a choice will be made.

We have long lost our notion of history as a pageant of cloak and sword. Rational opinion turns on our old Arthurian Wallace and Bruce and rends them. It substitutes the real drama of man's struggle for his rights and needs. Radio has joined us in cutting to the core of the historical apple, to the seeds of human progress through the life of a people. In the two main geographical courses, we have a sensibly modern treatment of the problems and genius of humanity in its larger physical environment.

At its worst, education removes the child's natural illiteracy and puts him in a fair way to earning a livelihood. At its best, our education opens the windows of the classroom, and lets the youth look out upon the life which awaits him, lets him see his fellow-man working and playing amidst his fellows, leading or following, getting and spending, designing and fashioning his own ends. Many a teacher will tell you, with natural pride in his craft, that working over the same material he can teach better than any wireless set invented. It is true given normal subject matter. But if we are to extend the awareness of the child beyond books, then we need all the resources of science to bring the world into the school. A beginning has been made with Talks to the Sixth Year. Known authorities set out to these senior students something of the historical background, the problems, the movements of to-day.

Curriculum we must have for a revised education. But if radio is guided by the poets and prophets, it must appear increasingly in the schools not as the teacher's aid to instruction as tested by examinations, but as the growing citizen's ally, and an open casement upon the real world.

W. E.

# RADIO AND TELEVISION

## By George Audit

THE FUNNY MAN is supreme in radio. Nine out of every ten listeners pay their money for a joke. Speech and melody are the elements of radio. The comedian personifies the former, and the cinema organist the latter. The B.B.C. has only gathered three million pounds a year because of its variety artists and its melody makers.

In literally millions of drab lives the Saturday evening Variety show is a bright point. Meals are put forward and glasses of beer refused to make way for it. In a canvass I made of East End streets a few months ago the huge majority of the people I met had a single complaint about the wireless: Saturday evening Variety at 9.30 was too late. It meant they dare not go out to the local pub beforehand for fear of missing the show and by the time it was over the pubs were shut.

The B.B.C. has responded to that demand only grudgingly, as a prude condescends to a kiss. It seems afraid of comedy. The Variety Department under Eric Maschwitz is of comparatively recent origin. The standard of comedy is the Victorian music hall, the Viennese heilige and the balalaika orchestra. Its regular Saturday show is called "Music Hall," complete with a fake audience clapping to numbers and ventriloquists, child impersonators, Scots comedians and the oldtime music hall stars from Charlie Coborn to Harry Tate. That would be tolerable if what the artists said had any relation to real life. But one tires of the mother-in-law joke, the sentimental song and the eternal malaproping at the expense of the Cockney.

We may be said to inherit two sources of humour. Buffoonery and Bacchus with its slapstick and doubtful jokes. And satire from Aristophanes. The B.B.C. abhors the one and suspects the other. It is probably wise to exclude the bawdy but it must find a substitute. The experience of the film would suggest satire. Charlie Chaplin and the Marx Brothers would surely lose all point unless their pranks were set in *real* surroundings. They make fun of the serious world. As in Greek drama the comic mask is merely the reverse of the tragic. In history the jester is always close to the politician.

The B.B.C. denies all that. Hungry for talent it sends Eric Maschwitz touring the capitals of Europe looking for artists, while Gillie Potter and Flotsam and Jetsam are "suspended" at home. Potter is a satirist. His Hogsnorton visits and his "Truth about the Press" turns were excellent humour. But he once offended by coming on before the General Election and making funny remarks about the political campaigns. He told me recently that he had not broadcast for three years because he was not asked and because he believes "broadcasting is a medium of entertainment of its own, and is not a glorified music hall, and no imitation music hall audience should come between the comedian and the wireless public." The B.B.C. gave him ten minutes alone with the microphone on March 19th. Shortly before he broadcast he told me, "It is my job as a licensed clown to know everybody's views and to comment on them without seeming to give offence." He reads all the English newspapers but he reads "French newspapers to find out what is happening in England." He is particularly annoyed with the Press and propaganda lords who make a practice of suppressing the truth. "How can they expect me to make them laugh when they are always hiding reality?" I quote Gillie Potter's remarks because they represent an attitude which the B.B.C. seems loth to admit into its comedy.

* * * *

One hears varied claims of the number of television receivers in use. One firm claims to be selling a thousand sets a month. A despondent B.B.C. official suggested forty a month. I should think it is safe to say that 200 new television sets are being brought into use every week. That should allow an audience of nearly 10,000 by the end of the year.

Television still suffers serious technical restrictions. The image is too small. The screen is only about 8 inches by 10 inches with fading at the corners. To be seen at a reasonable distance the illumination in the screen must be intensified with a consequent loss of proper contrast. Deep patchy shadows and bright points of light give a soot-and-whitewash effect. There must be projection on to a larger screen before we can expect any real enjoyment from television programmes.

Another limitation I have noticed is that you cannot get a "close-up" in the film sense. You can get alterations of focus but only up to half of the figure. When Elizabeth Cowell is announcing you have to look at practically all of her. Attempts at montage by using two cameras are sometimes effective.

The television camera is still tied to the Alexandra Palace by a steel cable several hundred yards long. When the B.B.C. manages to get its television cameras into the streets of London we may expect something interesting.

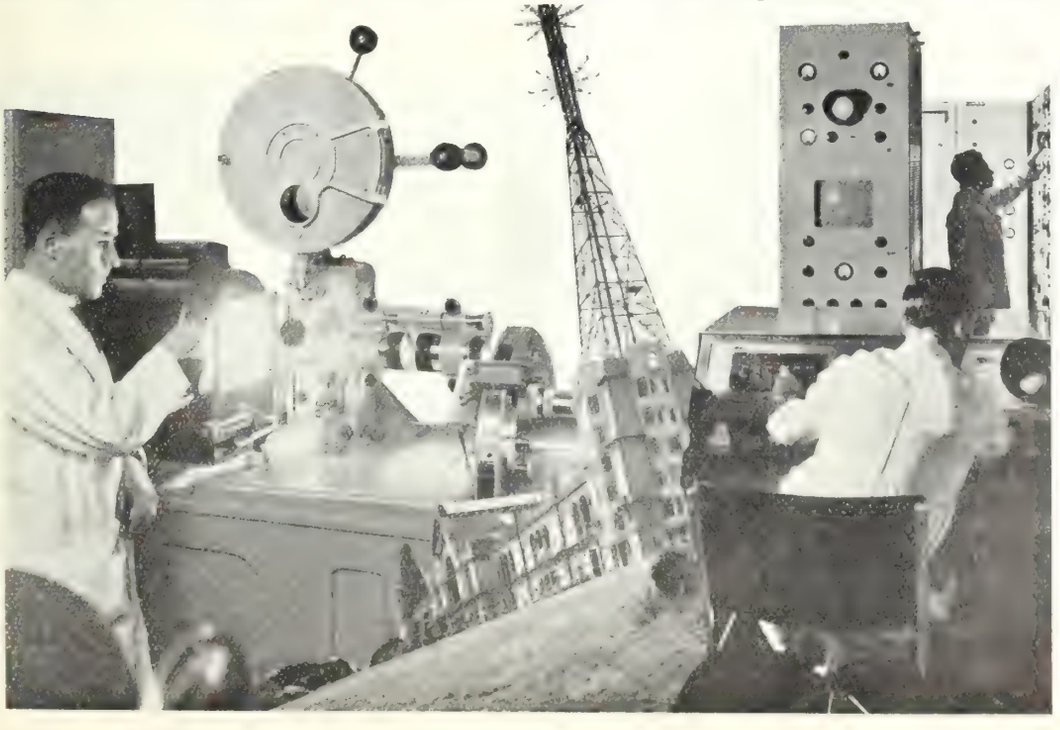
* * * *

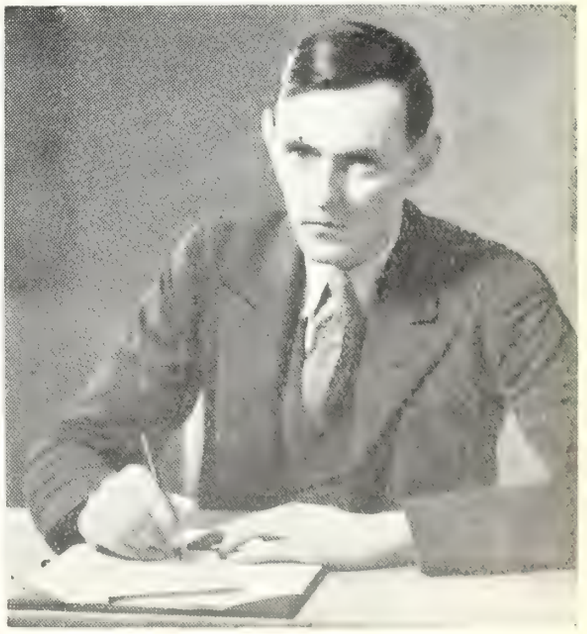
One of the items in the B.B.C.'s £100,000 budget for the Coronation was announced to be the installation of three new transmitters for the Empire service and an increase in the aerial-power of the Empire station at Daventry to 40 kilowatts. It now transpires that there may be another reason for this large and sudden expansion of imperial broadcasting.

Germany has a high-powered short-wave transmitting station, the Zeesen station in Berlin. This station, controlled by the Goebbels Ministry of Propaganda, is considered to be an integral part of the Nazi colonial-restoration campaign. It transmits programmes, consisting largely of "news," in English as well as German. Like Daventry, it sends its programmes to different geographical "zones" at different times of the day. And in each of the Zeesen zones lie British possessions or mandated territories.

In a world agreement drawn up by the International Broadcasting Union there is a clause to the effect that no State may broadcast propaganda programmes to another country in that country's language. The B.B.C. is reported to have given warning that Britain will not consider herself bound to this clause if Germany violates it.

Meanwhile, day and night shifts are at work carrying out the alterations and expansions of the Daventry transmitters.





Eric Maschwitz

# FILM GUIDE

## *Shorts*

**Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves** (Puppets in Gaspar-color).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Slatinay and George Pal
AXMINSTER: Guildhall — April 12, 3 days
BOWNESS: Royalty — April 29, 3 days
CLAYTON: Carlton — April 26, 6 days
DOUGLAS, I.O.M.: Regal — April 5, 3 days
GLASGOW: Boulevard, Knightswood — April 8, 3 days
Dalmarnock Picture House, Bridgeton — April 15, 3 days
Crown, Gorbals — April 8, 3 days
Pavilion, Clydebank — April 12, 3 days
KEIGHLEY: Regent — April 19, 6 days
KNARESBOROUGH: Cinema — April 29, 3 days
LLANDUDNO: Grand — April 8, 3 days
LONDON: News Theatre, Great Windmill Street — April 22, 4 days
OLDHAM: King's — April 5, 9 days
PENDLETON: Ambassador's — April 19, 6 days
SWINTON: Ellesmere — April 19, 6 days

**And So to Work** (A comedy of early morning rising—see page 29).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Richard Massingham
BRIDLINGTON: Lounge — April 26, 6 days
DAVENTRY: Regal — April 12, 3 days
DUNDEE: Royal — April 5, 3 days
ILFRACOMBE: Scala — April 1, 3 days
LINCOLN: Exchange — April 19, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Casino — April 15, 3 days
LONDON: King's, Wimbledon — April 19, 6 days
World News — April 8, 4 days
TORQUAY: Electric — April 19, 6 days
TOWCESTER: Cinema — April 15, 3 days

**Beside the Seaside** (Documentary of South Coast resorts).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson
LIVERPOOL: Smithdown Picture Playhouse — April 12, 3 days
LONDON: King's, Wimbledon — April 5, 6 days
SHEFFIELD: Chantrey Picture House — April 26, 3 days
Palace, Wincobank — April 29, 3 days

**Birthplace of America** (British origins of American pioneers).
*DISTRIBUTION.* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* A. Moncrieff Davidson
BOLTON: Carlton — April 22, 3 days
CHESTER: Tatler — April 12, 6 days
COLLINWOOD: Queen's — April 29, 3 days
LEEDS: Lounge, Headingley — April 1, 3 days
PEMBERTON: Carlton — April 1, 3 days
STOCKPORT: King's — April 14, 2 days
Vernon — April 5, 3 days
STOURBRIDGE: Scala — April 26, 3 days

**Cable Ship** (Documentary of the G.P.O. Cable Ships at work in the Channel).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
*DIRECTION:* Stuart Legg
LAINDON: Picture House — April 15, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Bedford, Walton — April 26, 3 days

**Coal Face** (Poetic treatment of coal-mining).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
*SOUND PRODUCTION:* Alberto Cavalcanti
CHAPEL-EN-LE-FRITH: Regent — April 12, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Picturedrome — April 29, 3 days
PRESTON: Regal — April 23, 2 days
WICK: Pavilion — April 19, 3 days
WINDERMERE: Empire — April 5, 3 days

**Cover to Cover** (Documentary of book production).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Alexander Shaw
BARNSTAPLE: Gaumont Palace — April 15, 5 days
BRIDLINGTON: Winter Gardens — April 15, 3 days
CLAYTON: Carlton — April 26, 6 days
HYDE: Alexandra — April 26, 3 days
Scala — April 5, 6 days
LLANDUDNO: Grand — April 15, 3 days
MANCHESTER: Ambassador's, Pendleton — April 19, 6 days
OXFORD: Scala — April 26, 6 days
SHEFFIELD: Palace — April 26, 6 days
SWINTON: Allesmere — April 12, 6 days

**Dragon of Wales** (A travelogue attempting to tackle economic conditions).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* W. B. Pollard
HULL: Criterion — April 29, 6 days
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: News Theatre — April 19, 6 days

**Earthquake** (Dramatic account of its cause and effect).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Pioneer Films
*DIRECTION:* Milton N. Moore
LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Road — April 26, 7 days

**Enough to Eat** ("The Nutrition Film").
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* The Gas Light and Coke Co.
*DIRECTION:* Edgar Anstey
BIRMINGHAM: Picture House, Harborne — April 8, 3 days
GLOSSOP: Empire — April 26, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Corona — April 5, 6 days
Empress — April 1, 3 days
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: News Theatre — April 12, 6 days

**Fire Fighters** (Documentary of the London Fire Brigade).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Peter Colin
ANDOVER: Odeon — April 8, 3 days
HULL: Langham — April 12, 3 days
Playhouse — April 29, 3 days
LONDON: Cinema, Hoxton — April 5, 7 days
NEWARK: Palace — April 1, 3 days
OXFORD: Scala — April 26, 3 days

**Fishing on the Banks of Skye.**
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
BUXTON: Opera House — April 19, 6 days
CHAPEL-EN-LE-FRITH: Regent — April 12, 3 days
DARLINGTON: Empire — April 8, 3 days
STOCKPORT: Plaza — April 12, 6 days

**How to Vote** (Amusing record of a political speech in the Benchley manner).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Robert Benchley
LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Road — April 19, 7 days

**Key to Scotland** (Documentary of Edinburgh).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson
BIRKENHEAD: Plaza — April 12, 3 days
Rialto, Bebington — April 26, 6 days
DUMFRIES: Regal — April 26, 3 days
EDINBURGH: Monseigneur — April 19, 3 days
GREENOCK: Regal — April 22, 3 days
HULL: Criterion — April 12, 6 days
IRVINE: Palace — April 29, 3 days
LONDON: Strand News, Agar Street — April 1, 4 days
ST. ANDREWS: Picture House — April 8, 3 days

**Low Water** (First day's work of a dock-side unemployed).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Turner-Robertson Films
MANCHESTER: Tatler, Oxford Street — April 12, 6 days

"Cover to Cover"

"Enough to Eat"

# Shorts (*contd.*)

**Men Against the Sea** (Documentary of North Sea trawling).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Vernon Sewell

| | |
|---|---|
| BROMLEY: Palais de Luxe | April 5, 7 days |
| HULL: Playhouse | April 22, 3 days |
| LONDON: Lion, Rotherhithe | April 12, 6 days |
| Varieties, Hoxton | April 12, 3 days |
| MANCHESTER: Whitehall, Openshaw | April 15, 3 days |
| MIDDLEWICH: Alhambra | April 8, 3 days |
| READING: Savoy | April 5, 3 days |
| SANDBACH: Palace | April 12, 3 days |
| SOUTHAMPTON: Cinenews | April 4, 4 days |
| TIBSHELF: Palace | April 12, 3 days |
| WINSFORD: Magnet | April 5, 3 days |

## Feature Films for April Release

**Theodora Goes Wild** (Columbia)
*DIRECTOR:* Richard Boleslawski
*STARRING:* Irene Dunne, Melvyn Douglas, Thomas Mitchell

**Sensation** (Wardour)
*DIRECTOR:* Brian Desmond Hurst
*STARRING:* John Lodge, Diana Churchill, Francis Lister, Athene Seyler, Margaret Vyner, Jerry Verno

**Winterset** (Radio)
*DIRECTOR:* Alfred Santell
*STARRING:* Burgess Meredith, Margo, Eduardo Ciannelli

**Daniel Boone** (Radio)
*DIRECTOR:* David Howard
*STARRING:* George O'Brien, Heather Angel

**Dishonour Bright** (G.F.D.)
*DIRECTOR:* Tom Walls
*STARRING:* Tom Walls, Eugene Pallette, Betty Stockfeld, Diana Churchill, Cecil Parker

**General Died at Dawn** (Paramount)
*DIRECTOR:* Lewis Milestone
*STARRING:* Gary Cooper, Madeleine Carroll, Akim Tamiroff, Dudley Digges, Porter Hall

**Land Without Music** (G.F.D.)
*DIRECTOR:* Walter Forde
*STARRING:* Richard Tauber, Diana Napier, Jimmy Durante, June Clyde

**Libelled Lady** (M.G.M.)
*DIRECTOR:* Jack Conway
*STARRING:* Jean Harlow, William Powell, Myrna Loy, Spencer Tracy, Walter Connolly

**Love on the Run** (M.G.M.)
*DIRECTOR:* W. S. Van Dyke
*STARRING:* Joan Crawford, Clark Gable, Franchot Tone, Reginald Owen

**This'll Make You Whistle** (G.F.D.)
*DIRECTOR:* Herbert Wilcox
*STARRING:* Jack Buchanan, Elsie Randolph, Jean Gillie

**Milestones** (The varying types to be seen in England).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* A. Moncrieff Davidson

| | |
|---|---|
| BIRMINGHAM: Capitol, Ward End | April 5, 3 days |
| CHESTER: Tatler | April 5, 6 days |
| CLITHEROE: Grand | April 26, 2 days |
| DUNDEE: Royal | April 19, 3 days |
| LEEDS: Shaftesbury | April 8, 3 days |
| MORECAMBE: Whitehall | April 22, 3 days |
| PONTEFRACT: Premier | April 29, 3 days |
| SADDLEWORTH: Palace | April 19, 3 days |
| STOURBRIDGE: King's Hall | April 12, 6 days |
| SUNDERLAND: Millfield | April 26, 3 days |
| WIGAN: Prince's | April 12, 6 days |
| WORKSOP: Gaiety | April 5, 3 days |

**Night Mail** (Documentary of the northward trip of the postal special).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
*DIRECTION:* Basil Wright and Harry Watt

| | |
|---|---|
| BO'NESS: Royalty | April 29, 3 days |
| BRIGHOUSE: Albert Hall | April 2, 2 days |
| COATBRIDGE: Regal | April 22, 3 days |
| COCKERMOUTH: Grand | April 1, 3 days |
| KNARESBOROUGH: Cinema | April 19, 3 days |

**Scratch Meal** (Marcel Boulestin at work).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*DIRECTION:* Arthur Elton

| | |
|---|---|
| LEEDS: Queens | April 1, 3 days |
| LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Road | April 19, 7 days |

**Secret Hiding Places** (Priest holes to be found in English country houses).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Granville Squiers

| | |
|---|---|
| BOURNEMOUTH: Regent | April 12, 6 days |
| BRIGHTON: Academy | April 18, 4 days |
| CIRENCESTER: Picture House | April 8, 3 days |
| GLASGOW: B.B. Cinema | April 15, 3 days |
| GRIMSBY: Savoy | April 19, 6 days |

**"Secrets of Life" Series** (Imaginative descriptions of natural processes).
*DISTRIBUTION:* G.B.D.
*DIRECTION:* Mary Field
*TECHNICAL SUPERVISION:* Percy Smith
**Rock Pools**

| | |
|---|---|
| MANCHESTER: Tatler, Oxford Street | April 5, 6 days |

**Vanishing Sails.** (Story of the Medway Sailing Barges)
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Steuart Films
*DIRECTION:* Ronald Steuart

| | |
|---|---|
| MANCHESTER: Crescent Theatre, Hulme | April 29, 3 days |
| SHEFFIELD: Regal, Kaveton Park | April 5, 3 days |
| TIBSHELF, DERBY: Palace | April 26, 3 days |

# Foreign Films

**Der Ammerkoenig** ("King of the Nurses"—banned German comedy).
*DIRECTION:* Hans Steinhoff.
LONDON: Studio One, Oxford Street
Following *La Kermesse Héroïque*

**Burgtheater** (Austrian).
*SCENARIO and DIRECTION:* Willi Forst
*STARRING:* Werner Krauss, Olga Tschechowa
LONDON: Academy, Oxford Street, April 16, indefinitely

**The Deserter** (Pudovkin's first sound film—Russian).
*DIRECTION:* V. I. Pudovkin
*STARRING:* Boris Livanov
LONDON: Forum, Villiers Street April 1–3

**Ernte** ("Harvest")—Austrian.
*DIRECTOR:* Geza von Bolvary
*STARRING:* Paula Wessely
LONDON: Academy, Oxford Street April 1–15

**Golem** (Czechoslovakian—French dialogue).
*DIRECTION:* Julian Duvivier
*STARRING:* Harry Baur
LONDON: Forum, Villiers Street April 4, indefinitely

**Pépé Le Moko** (French).
*DIRECTION:* Julian Duvivier
*STARRING:* Jean Gabin
LONDON: Curzon Following *The Sequel to Second Bureau*

**"The General Died at Dawn"—Released this month**

# *rfu*

# *first · film*

# *in production*

## *Basil Wright*

*A.R.F.P*

## *John Taylor*

*A.R.F.P*

**SCRIPT AND SCENARIO ADVISOR**

## *A. Cavalcanti*

# *realist film unit*

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# world FILM news

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# LIST OF BOOKINGS TO MATURE ON "MARCH OF TIME" SECOND YEAR

*For its second year "MARCH OF TIME" has arranged contracts for showing in more than 1200 Cinemas. Below is a selection from a list that covers the British Isles and Irish Free State.*

| CINEMA. | PLACE. |
|---|---|
| Forum ... | Southampton. |
| Futurist ... | Birmingham. |
| Plaza ... | Regent Street. |
| Paramount ... | Tottenham Court Rd. |
| Capitol ... | Cardiff. |
| Westover ... | Bournemouth. |
| Kings ... | Bristol. |
| Paramount ... | Manchester. |
| Whiteladies | Bristol. |
| Paramount ... | Liverpool. |
| Regal ... | Torquay. |
| Paramount ... | Leeds. |
| Paramount ... | Newcastle. |
| Paramount ... | Glasgow. |
| Savoy ... | Brighton. |
| Astoria ... | Cliftonville. |
| Granada ... | Dover. |
| Central or Playhouse | Folkestone. |
| Rivoli ... | Southend. |
| Regent ... | Gt. Yarmouth. |
| Marina ... | Lowestoft. |
| Majestic or Ritz | Oxford. |
| Super Electra, Palace | Oxford. |
| Olympia ... | Newport, Mon. |
| Castle ... | Merthyr. |
| Beau Nash ... | Bath. |
| Pavilion ... | Ramsgate. |
| Silver Cinema | Worcester. |
| Theatre Royal | Preston |
| Synod Hall | Edinburgh. |
| Palace Grand or Winter Gdn. | Blackpool. |
| Capitol ... | Dublin. |
| Grafton ... | Dublin. |
| Odeon ... | South Harrow. |
| Empire ... | Mile End. |
| Empress ... | Hackney. |
| Commodore | Hammersmith. |
| Forum ... | Fulham Road. |
| Forum ... | Ealing. |
| Dominion ... | Southall. |
| Embassy ... | Harrow. |
| Carlton ... | Winchmore Hill. |
| Ritz ... | Bowes Park. |
| Cameo ... | Bear Street. |
| Alma or Empire | Luton. |
| Bruce Grove | Tottenham. |
| Coliseum ... | Harrow. |
| Tatler ... | Charing Cross Road. |
| Tussauds ... | Baker Street. |
| Lido ... | Golders Green. |
| Ritz ... | Edgware. |
| South Cinema | Hackney. |
| Hippodrome | Willesden. |
| Ritz ... | Neasden. |
| Olympia ... | Shoreditch. |
| Palaceum ... | Commercial Road. |
| Rialto, Plaza or Ritz | Maidenhead. |
| Hippodrome | Poplar. |
| Rex ... ... | Stratford. |
| Carlton ... | Upton Park. |
| Palace ... | Kensal Rise. |
| Coronation | Manor Park. |
| Capitol ... | Barking. |
| Princess ... | Dagenham. |
| Blue Hall ... | Edgware Road. |
| Dominion ... | Walthamstow. |
| Queens ... | Bayswater. |
| Regal ... | Uxbridge. |
| Majestic ... | Woodford. |
| Ritz ... | Harringay. |
| Savoy ... | Acton. |
| Savoy ... | Enfield. |
| Curzon ... | Mayfair. |
| Tatler ... | Liverpool. |
| Kings ... | Liverpool. |
| Princes ... | Liverpool. |
| Empire ... | Chatham. |
| Ritz Central or Palace | Maidstone. |
| Pavilion ... | Cork |
| Grand Central | Dublin. |
| Majestic, Regal Super or Plaza | Gravesend. |
| Victoria ... | Cambridge. |
| Hippodrome | Rotherhithe. |
| Palace ... | Camberwell. |
| Playhouse ... | Balham. |
| Mayfair ... | Tooting. |
| Majestic ... | Mitcham. |
| Savoy ... | Croydon. |
| Hippodrome | Croydon. |
| Regal ... | Purley. |
| Majestic or St. James | Kings Lynn. |
| Savoy ... | Wandsworth |
| Prince of Wales | Lewisham. |
| Capitol ... | Forest Hill. |
| Capitol ... | Blackheath. |
| Theatre ... | Elephant & Castle. |
| Hippodrome | Putney. |
| Savoy ... | Teddington. |
| Trocadero ... | Southport. |
| Wembley Hall Cinema. | Wembley. |
| Odeon ... | Wimbledon. |
| Odeon ... | Barnet. |
| Hippodrome or Empire | Greenwich. |
| Odeon ... | Haverstock Hill. |
| State & Rialto | Dartford. |
| Odeon ... | Finchley. |
| Dominion ... | Hounslow. |
| Cranstons ... | Glasgow. |
| Hippodrome | Belfast. |
| Odeon ... | Derby. |
| Palace ... | Leicester. |
| Theatre Royal | Bradford. |
| Pioneer ... | Dewsbury. |
| Theatre Royal | Halifax. |
| Hippodrome | Sheffield. |
| Princes ... | Portsmouth. |
| Tivoli or Troxy | Portsmouth. |
| Cinema ... | Aberdare. |
| Radio Centre | East Grinstead. |
| Exchange ... | Lincoln. |
| Regal ... | Watford. |
| Odeon ... | Chingford. |
| Ritz ... | Doncaster. |
| Dorchester ... | Hull. |
| Majestic ... | West Hartlepool. |
| Elite ... | Middlesbrough. |

*M. Boulestin shows how : a scene from a cooking film*

*'Enough to Eat?' A social problem dealt with in the film of that name*

*Housing problem, and how it is being solved, stills from the films*

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**THE GAS LIGHT & COKE COMPANY**

Horseferry Road, S.W.1.

world FILM news

AND TELEVISION PROGRESS
(INCORPORATING CINEMA QUARTERLY)

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# "The Pretty Characterless Face"—of Hollywood

*"I will tell you the truth" says HUGH WALPOLE after eighteen months of scripting.*

*In an interview with DANVERS WILLIAMS*

I SAT with Hugh Walpole in his flat overlooking the Green Park.

As was plainly emphasised by the many objects in the room, Mr. Walpole is a man of varied tastes. He is interested in painting, sculpture, dancing, music, the theatre, the cinema, literature—in fact, everything.

Walpole is not merely a scholar. He is a man of wide experience, sophisticated, civilised, and—strange in one of his age—full of enthusiasm.

"You want my candid opinion of the film-industry," he said. "It would be simple enough, in an interview of this kind, to ignore Hollywood's weaknesses; to concentrate on the many charming people I met while I was over there and to end up by saying that although things aren't altogether perfect, the industry is still in its childhood and is, under the circumstances, progressing marvellously.

"But in that there would be little point, so I will tell you the truth.

"Hollywood is divided into two parts. One faction is composed of enthusiasts, brilliant men with ideas and initiative, who are striving to progress. On the other hand there is an equally large body of people, attracted to the industry by its enormous wealth, who care nothing for films or good taste.

"Unfortunately, the latter often stifle the more creative artists.

"When I first arrived in Hollywood I was braced up with the idea that the cinema was a new and undeveloped art-form. I wanted to work for it and give it all I had. I thought that after I had learned something about screen technique I should be encouraged to collaborate with the director (as Riskin collaborates with Capra) and that some of my ideas would ultimately find their way to the screen. I was splendidly helped in *David Copperfield*, but apart from this, I had little freedom.

"I cannot state too emphatically that it is a deplorable position in which Hollywood writers find themselves. There must be any amount of young men over there, better equipped than myself to write scenarios, who have their work cut to ribbons and their ideas stifled by Hollywood's muddle-mindedness.

"The men with ideas, whether they are stars, actors or writers, are finding it extremely difficult to develop the cinema as an art-form. You begin to realise the existing state of affairs if you stop to look at a few Hollywood pictures.

"Some of them are little better than piffle. Others (and in this category I include such pictures as *David Copperfield*) are quite efficiently made and capable of entertaining a sophisticated man or woman. But few of these, even, are what I would call cinematically progressive. For the most part, they are built up on a technique borrowed from the stage.

"I have seen scores of motion-pictures in my time. Very rarely have I witnessed a scene which has gripped my imagination. I have enjoyed them in passing, and then forgotten all about them, as one does a pretty, characterless face. If I want dramatic, sophisticated emotional entertainment, I go to the theatre.

"The only person who has tackled the motion-picture properly, and who has got away with it on a big scale, is Walt Disney.

## Hugh Walpole (cont.)

"It has long been apparent to all those who have given the matter sufficient thought that, if the cinema is eventually to take its place alongside the other arts, it is no use at all trying to cover up its shadowy two-dimensional properties with a false atmosphere of reality.

"It is no use trying to use the screen as a medium for theatrical drama. Histrionics have a place in the cinema and so has realism, but the film technique must be original. One must face the fact that the screen is a sort of dream thing, and realism on the film cannot be stage realism.

"Hollywood's more progressive faction is quite conscious of the way the cinema should be developed. There are a score of first-rate directors over there, but they are prevented from making any real progress by the financial dictators, who, as often as not, know nothing of films and direct proceedings from their offices in Wall Street. So the real enthusiasts, who know and have learned to love films, find themselves castrated. They are paid to make motion-pictures on a technique borrowed from the stage and they have to subordinate their own talents in order to vest stars with false kudos.

"When I first arrived in California I knew practically nothing about films. I soon began to realise how false was the whole procedure of picture making. I saw actors borrowed from the stage, placed on a chalk line and told to do their stuff. The finished product gave an illusion of acting, but it was (and could be) nothing more than an illusion. How can an actor possible 'live a part' in the stage tradition when he is never before the cameras for more than a few seconds at a stretch?

"Most of the pictures which emerge from Hollywood are built up on this same muddled compromise. No wonder the majority of them fail to make any impression on the cultured mind. The cinema cannot hope to develop along its true two-dimensional form until the whole idea of stage-acting is banished from the screen.

"The waste of talent is appalling. An artist like Fred Astaire, whose dancing might be used to good purpose, is starred in trashy musicals. Astaire himself wants to forge ahead, wants to make significant dancing films, but his ambition is stifled by his employers.

"The Astaire musicals—like most other American films—are designed principally to appeal to the Middle West. If the Middle West returns big dividends, then the financial dictators are satisfied. What these gentlemen forget is that in London, New York, Chicago, Birmingham, Paris, Berlin and all the other big cities of Europe and America there is a public which wants creative films, just as there is a public for creative literature. These people are ignored.

"Many cultured men and women stay away from the cinema altogether. Thousands more, less meticulous in their tastes, pay the picture-house an occasional visit, but their attitude is one of toleration rather than appreciation. These people would all welcome a more vital and significant form of entertainment.

"One would tolerate a certain amount of hokum (as one has tolerated it for so many years in the theatre), if only the real artists were allowed to forge ahead.

"I would like to see Fred Astaire in a picture directed by Williams K. Howard, with music by Gershwin and décor by Oliver Messell. Given a free hand, these four brilliant men would be bound to make a most interesting film.

"I should like to see Paul Muni drop his stagey technique and star in a Capra production of *Jack and The Beanstalk*.

"More daring, I would like Riskin to write a scenario for René Clair, introduce Picasso to create the settings and William Walton to write the music.

"When things like this begin to happen on a big scale, then—and then only—will the American motion-picture be ready to take its place among the more established art-forms."

# The Big Drum of *Time Marches On*

HUNTING through some movie catalogues, we come upon a film called *Anchors Aweigh*, made in 1926. Certain shots seem strangely familiar. Familiar, because, even to-day, newsreel editors fish them out of the vaults to complete sequences on the United States Navy. They equal more modern material in quality, often surpass it in pictorial conception. Note, too, the *Potemkin* influence.

*Anchors Aweigh*, sponsored by the United States Naval Recruiting Bureau, was directed by Louis de Rochemont,* one of the three founders of *The March of Time*.

Louis de Rochemont began making films on his own in 1916, when he was eighteen years old. Already he had served an apprenticeship with a news cameraman, who had the idea of filming football matches for rush presentation. His first productions were commercially sponsored, scientific films on plants and machinery. He joined the Navy when America entered the War, served as a lieutenant, resigned after the Armistice to produce documentaries independently. Amongst them were several naval recruiting films, including *Anchors Aweigh*, and the *Jack and Gadget* series, an early experiment in the superimposition of animated cartoon upon travelogue.

Then de Rochemont joined the newsreels. He made three trips round the world, producing material for Fox News, Pathé News, International Newsreel, and finally pursued wild animals in the jungles of Malaya with one of Fox Movietone's first sound equipped units, emerged opportunity to cover the Ghandi troubles in Bombay and Calcutta.

Returning to the United States, he created for Movietone, under the direction of Truman H. Talley, Movietone's General Manager then and now, the famous *Magic Carpet* series, which represented a first attempt to emerge from the battle of flowers conception of news to a wider representation of the structure of civilisation. Here, perhaps, was the germ of the *March of Time* idea.

The next step was de Rochemont's collaboration in an experiment in the re-enactment of history. A series of productions, called *The March of the Years*, was released by Columbia, but failed commercially.

Meantime, in 1923, while the series of documentaries, that culminated in *Anchors Aweigh*, was in production, two young men, no older than Louis de Rochemont, had set out to fulfil a similar ambition in a different medium. Henry R. Luce and Briton Hadden, on hired typewriters in an abandoned brewery, composed the first dummy number of a magazine to be called *Time*. To-day *Time* sells 700,000 copies a week. In 1934, Roy E. Larsen, its circulation manager (now vice-president), and John S. Martin, managing editor, met Louis de Rochemont. They formed the first editorial board of *The March of Time*, and, backed by the experience and the genius for organisation of Luce's vast *Time* Inc. publishing enterprise, the first issue of *The March of Time* appeared on American screens in December 1934. No more fortunate collaboration can be imagined than the Larsen-Martin-de Rochemont triumvirate. To-day, it is impossible to say what elements were contributed by one or the other. Since *Time* Inc. launched its newest publication, *Life*, both Larsen and Martin have had to devote much of their time to it, leaving more production responsibility in the hands of Louis de Rochemont.

**Richard de Rochemont, his younger brother, at present in charge of the European activities of* Time *including* The March of Time, *with offices in Paris and London.*

## *In this Issue*

COVER: Ronald Colman in *Lost Horizon*


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***See important announcement by Mr. Flaherty and Mr. Grierson on p. 42.***

# EDITORIAL

## The Party Whip

IT WAS OBSERVED recently that a new sort of curse is coming over the British scene. The crude estimate of *left* or *right* begins to be applied to everyone and everything. The notion that people might be just plumb sensible disappears. That gracious interchange of effort and opinion which was the liberal, the democratic and the British ideal develops into an acrid battle of dogma and prejudice.

Mr. Grierson's article on another page testifies that we have had more than a sign of this change in the film world. The party whip—it does not matter what colour the ribbons—has been applied, and a progressive outlook becomes increasingly difficult.

Like the radio, cinema has its responsibilities. An art so influential cannot lightly give offence. On the other hand, it has the duty to its generation of illumining the life it describes and drawing from reality if the cause of true drama is to be served. The party interventions of the past few months, with their complaints about *Nutrition* films and the like, do the cinema a great evil. They inhibit an industry already sadly inhibited. They discourage a spirit of description which would bring, as it has done in America, new vitality to British pictures.

On other grounds we deplore the party line. It is irresponsible. It brings to matters of National importance a narrower view-point than authoritative Conservative statesmen would countenance. Poor Wardour Street which hardly knows the difference between a "political ward heeler" and a statesman almost inevitably gives undue weight to these words from "high quarters." We beg it not to be flurried. When the die-hard agitation was started against the B.B.C. recently, it was properly trounced by papers like *The Times* and by Conservative statesmen themselves. Whenever these political interventions occur, producers, renters and the members of the Censor Board may rely similarly on the support of the strongest and most sensible forces in the country.

The "political ward heelers," we are sure, are nice people, doing the best they can for their party, but we hope they will not take themselves too seriously. If they continue to do so we shall be under the painful necessity of taking them seriously ourselves. "Left is left and right is right" is all very well for the political hustings. The rest of us have longer term issues to serve. Holding the mirror up to nature is one of them; and we are not going to have it clouded by the hot and horrid breath of political controversy.

## The Yard-stick of Cruelty

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS has been staging a grand debate about the cinema's cruelty to animals. It is a difficult subject because no one wants to go on record on behalf of cruelty. But tender-mindedness is as deep a danger to the human spirit as any and it is right to call for a balance.

Blood sports from the tender-minded point of view are cruel, but they give a sustenance to heart and eye which has the long justification of time. Fighting is another desperate evil for the tender minded, but the philosophies are more deeply exercised in the Harringay Ring than in the asceptic splendours of a city milk bar. To come nearer to the cinema there was a great outcry at the time against the "sadistic" exhibition of the assassination of Alexander, yet solid criticism registered itself with the "sadists." It was the most remarkable document which the newsreels had given us for years. Its vision of life with the lid off was a rich and even cathartic experience.

The yard-stick of cruelty is surely the justification of it. The House of Commons agreed to justify the cruelty of vivisection. It agreed to justify cruelty so long as it was in the natural course of hunting. We suggest humbly that it might logically justify cruelty if it happens to make a good picture. What are the satisfactions of physical health and sport that they should have priority over the satisfactions of the æsthetic judgment; and what philosopher would defend that priority?

The House of Commons had a wrongish sense of values. There was considerable play with the tortures of the whale in *Moby Dick*, though, in sad truth, the whale was made of rubber. The war of Captain Ahab against the Spirit of Evil was surely Miltonic enough to justify not only a real whale but any embarrassment harpoons might have caused it. The House of Commons would ban the harpoons because they are for the "purpose of cinematography." Hang this for sentimental nonsense. In any decent production of *Moby Dick* they would be for the purpose of enlightening mankind.

It looks as though we shall have to strike a middle course and leave room for just a little rough stuff. We are faintly sick when we hear of a film being withdrawn from the Leicester Square theatre because the R.S.P.C.A. objects to the hooking of fish. We shall feel sicker still when all the shooting is of clay pigeons, all the boxing is shadow boxing, all the vituperations of all the Ahabs are directed against rubber, and reality is crucified on a fake cross, specially devised by Mr. Korda's trick department.

## A Ghost is Laid

FROM WHITEHALL TWO STRONG little rays of sunshine appear. The Home Office has at last gone on record about non-flam. film and believes it is not dangerous. This is an event of first-rate national importance in the film world. It means an end to those doubts which have prevented educationists and others from using the 16 mm. film. It means the beginning of a new era of confidence in which the substandard cinema may become an even greater force than the cinema of the theatres. The ghost of the "inflammability of non-flam." has been officially laid.

Equally bright is the sudden unheralded appearance of the new edition of the Board of Education's Handbook for Teachers. It may not mean much to a large number of our readers but to every producer of educational films, to every one who uses films in school and to every one who serves the cause of education by film, it is magna charta. For the Board has gone on record in favour of the use of films.

It takes a long time to move Whitehall and properly so. Its authority, like that of art, is the greater for being long in the making. Rejoice then that Whitehall has officially recognised the cinema in this year of grace, 1937. It is indeed a Coronation year.

## A Devil's Bargain?

THERE ARE INTERESTING MOVES NOW ON FOOT IN Wardour Street. The first move is to create a central governing body for the film trade. The move is calculated to counter the suggestion of the Moyne Committee for a Film Commission which will put the vagaries of the film trade under a measure of Government control. Better govern ourselves say the Tradesmen, than have the Government do it for us. Mr. Leslie Burgin, Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade, may be said to have given an official blessing to the idea by "dropping a hint."

What is there to fear in combining renters', exhibitors' and producers' interests in a central governing body? There is the Renters' Society, an organisation with preponderant American interests. There is the Exhibitors' Association which, to tell the truth, does not care where the pictures come from, so long as they make money. The independent British producers would have a relatively thin time in such a galley, and they know it. They were not even invited to the first meeting called to promote the new governing body.

The second move is even more interesting, though it is all very mysterious at the moment. Certain British producers are anxious to turn the Quota Act into a Reciprocity Act. Their idea is that American renters should be freed from their obligations to rent quota films if they pay a fixed sum towards the production of British pictures and undertake circulation in America. It is an amusing scheme because it puts a tax on American renters and puts the tax directly into the funds of the British film producers. A more cynical version of the plan calls for the abolition of all quota together—exhibitor's and renter's. The Americans instead, are to pay 10 per cent. of their takings to British production. Hollywood is to finance the British studios.

The scheme in one form or other is known to have the backing of Mr. Maxwell and Mr. Ostrer and there is some question of promoting an organisation which will sell the idea to Parliament and the public. Where's the rub in this? The person who suffers by both these moves is, of course, the independent producer. A body largely influenced by the American renter and the British exhibitor will not worry too much about his interests. He may well feel afraid of it and prefer the greater detachment of a Commission set up by Whitehall. A law which absolves the American renter from handling British pictures and merely obliges him to finance British pictures, must inevitably work in favour of the producers who have bargaining power on the exhibiting side—who, in other words, have theatres the Americans want. It serves Messrs. Maxwell and Ostrer more than it serves Messrs. Korda and Schach.

This is plainly a dangerous situation. It might be interpreted as a devil's bargain between American renter and British exhibitor to shorten sail on British film production—for without quota fewer British films would be necessary. The independent producer—the hope of the British cinema—is plainly nowhere.

# CIVILISATIONS OF THE WORLD

## by Alex Shaw

Sakai Girl, Malaya

*Illustrations are from the material shot by Alex Shaw, Ralph Keene and George Noble for a series of films on the Countries along the England to Australia Air-route. These films are being made by* Strand

FOR good or evil, the aeroplane affects the whole world. It has made the jungle dweller of Malaya as vulnerable in war as the inhabitant of Alexandria, and has brought the swagman of the Australian Bush as close to the city as the man who lives in Clapham. It is as representative of the civilisation of to-day as the Temples of Angkor and Egypt were of the civilisations of the past; as representative as the corroboree dances of the aboriginal are of the undeveloped cultures of the present. This was my theme when I went to film some of the material achievements of the past and some of the people who are affected by the aeroplane to-day.

Apart from this main film, enough material was collected for a film about Malaya, as well as for several shorts on various customs and industries. Cattle, sheep and sugar, for instance, were some of our subjects in Australia, which at the time of our stay was suffering from drought, the Test Matches and the abdication. The Australians, rather in the public school spirit, have adopted a code of toughness, which seems to be purely superficial and which consists mainly in doing without the amenities of life if the procuring of these amenities involves any great effort.

That the Australian Aborigines are dying out seems to be partly due to their own rather impractical marriage laws, which insist that the mother-in-law is a more important factor than the bride. Every male child, therefore, is presented at birth with a mother-in-law of his own age, and he is allowed no wife except the child of his chosen mother-in-law. If she survives and grows up to have daughters and if they survive and grow up, then, and then only, does the man get a wife—or rather wives, for he has a right to all her daughters. The fact that by this arrangement very few men ever get a wife until they are past the age of thirty leads to fantastic feuds between the different tribes and families over the stealing of wives and the bequeathing of widows.

Of their ceremonies we filmed an alligator and an aeroplane corroboree.

The importance of air transport to the industrial and social development of Australia has been very great. In a country where the unit of distance is a hundred miles and where one's nearest neighbour may be anything from 80 to 500 miles away; where the railway only touches the fringes of the continent and where the roads are impassable during the rainy season, the aeroplane has brought a new life to the people who live away from the cities.

From Australia, with its cups of scalding tea, its hospitality and its policy of an all-White continent, the unit travelled to Bali, perhaps the only country in the world where a race has evolved a way of living which gives contentment and happiness to the individual as well as to the community, and the only place of its kind where the natives have remained unspoilt in spite of the tourists, their cars, their cameras and their insatiable curiosity.

The Dutch, with an eye, no doubt, on the tourist traffic, are helping the Balinese to preserve their culture and their economic freedom. They have decreed that no European may own property on the island and no missionary may land there. Only once was a missionary allowed to remain and he eventually succeeded in making one convert. Unfortunately, the Balinese, as soon as he was converted, was excluded from his temple, which meant exclusion from the life of the community, so he murdered the missionary and then committed suicide.

Balinese life will be presented in the film as an advanced and civilised way of living, in comparison with the Khmers who achieved the temples at Angkor, and in contrast to the aborigines in Australia. The Balinese kept their Hindu religion when the rest of the Malay peninsula was converted to Islam, but, isolated from its source, Hinduism here has been gradually changed and rid of unpleasant aspects. They have always kept their old, animistic beliefs and side by side with the worship of Brahma, Siva and Vishnu is a strong belief in spirits, both good and evil. Opposite, and close to, the entrance of a Balinese courtyard is a stone wall, erected to protect the people of the household, since evil spirits cannot go round corners. Nor are these precautions confined to the Balinese themselves, for, as in many other countries in the East, the belief in evil spirits is accepted by the European inhabitants as well. Instead of the were-wolf it is the were-tiger; instead of a blue light over the tombs of a Norfolk churchyard it is a ball of fire rising and falling under the palm trees of Bali.

Their great recreations are cock-fighting and dancing. Cock-fighting contrasts oddly with their gentle and peaceful natures, but perhaps it satisfies that human lust for violence remaining in even the most civilised of Western nations and finding its outlet in political purges, all-in-wrestling and lynchings. Some of the dances are purely recreational, such as the djanger, which was invented as recently as 1921, and shows the influence of Hollywood, although there is only one cinema on the island and that is patronised mainly by the Chinese and Europeans. Usually, when a Balinese has seen one film, he is satisfied and has no wish to see another, but they have picked up ideas for their dances from the films. In the djanger, for instance, the men wear Chaplin moustaches and football stockings, and

Bali: Temple Carvings

Siamese dancing girls

sometimes, instead of the traditional legend, they will mime something they have seen in a film. But in spite of this readiness to absorb new ideas, and with the exception of the all-conquering shirt, without which no Balinese would dream of going to town, there are few signs of any great change in their way of living.

Besides the recreational dances, they have their temple stories told in mime and dance, and of these we filmed the Barong, a story of the eternal struggle between Good and Evil in which neither side ever wins. Although it was staged for us at our location and at our time, once it had started it went straight on for three hours and had to be shot in newsreel fashion. Although there is laughter and bawdry in the dance, the spiritual force behind it is very strong and as the story progressed the impression of watching reality grew, so that the dancers were no longer people in masks: they were the Warrior and the Witch and the Tiger. Acting ceased to be acting and it required considerable effort to get close-ups of Rangda the Evil One, in whose reality one already half believed. The performance ended in a Kris dance, in which the men went into trances and were carried into the temple. The seething mass of people, of priests and priestesses, of men stabbing themselves with daggers, constantly harried by the Barong, made filming difficult. Added to which, the dancers had by this time forgotten the camera completely and Noble and I were on the run the whole time to avoid being trampled on by the Barong or mixed up in a Kris fight.

Outside influences appear in their carvings, and side by side with the figures of the Hindu legends there are wall carvings which show men falling out of aeroplanes and people being run over by motor cars.

Their principal food is rice and an odd sequence we filmed shows a flock of ducks being conducted to a flooded field by a man bearing a stick with a white rag attached to it. He plants the stick in the field which he wishes the ducks to de-grub. Although there are numerous flocks of ducks in the adjoining field, the flock will not leave the field in which their own stick is planted.

It is the people who work in the fields and the villages who do the dancing and make the carvings. The girl who weaves the cloth in the kampong probably knows several legends and their accompanying movements by heart and the men planting the rice will to-night play the music for her and the others to dance.

From Bali we went to Malaya, where war preparations have sent the price of rubber and tin soaring and made the country so very prosperous. The material we shot there deals with the life and commerce of the country and is to be made into a film called "Five Faces," since Malaya is inhabited by five races: the Sakai, the Malaya, the Chinese, the Tamils and the Europeans. The British imported thousands of Chinese and Tamils to work the tin mines and rubber plantations; to construct the roads and generally do the hard work, for the aristocratic Malay, sensitive and proud, with his rather sinister sense of humour, will only work at the things which interest him. He prefers to fish, to tend his rice and to sit in the sun; but his quick intelligence and enthusiasm made filming simple.

The many different tribes which have the generic name of Sakai were the original people of Malaya and were driven to the jungles and mountains by the sea-faring Malays, who came from Sumatra. Away from contact with the Malay border villages, they lead an industrious life, moving from clearing to clearing as they exhaust the soil with their crops. They still make fire with friction, although matches are filtering up by way of the Chinese traders. They use blow pipes and poisoned darts to kill birds and small animals, although this picturesque method of hunting is strictly utilitarian, for in dense undergrowth it would be impossible to find a bird or an animal that had been immediately killed. The poisoned dart allows it to live for a few minutes, during which its wounded movements can be followed by the eye.

But the life of the Sakais is becoming complicated, for the untapped mineral and timber riches of the jungles and hills among which they live are attracting commerce.

Five races and five different languages, five religions and five ways of living; only the fact that their standard of living is higher than anywhere else in the East to account for the harmony in which they all live together.

There are three kinds of films shown in Malaya. From Madras come Tamil talkies, strange stories of seduction technically horrible but full of enthusiasm. Hong-Kong sends Chinese films of love stories in modern settings, and England and America provide their epics for the tired tuan.

From the American musicals the Malay has taken many of the tunes and dances for the touring opera companies. These are crude affairs, in which a dramatic scene of a murder or a death may be immediately followed by a troupe of dancing girls to a re-orchestrated "Sonny Boy." Then the story is resumed until it is time for the tap dancer. The musical interludes were all we ever heard because the rest was drowned by the incomprehensible and fantastic noises from the Chinese theatre, which always seemed to be next door.

After a month in Malaya we travelled up through Siam and out to Siem Reap in Cambodia. There in the forest we found the city of Angkor, much of it overgrown with trees. The wooden dwellings of the people have disappeared but the temples and palaces of their rulers still stand, their silence only broken by the sound of the aeroplanes on their way to the far East. In the galleries and corridors of Angkor Wat live swarms of bats, and only the Buddhist priest in the corner is a reminder that here was once the mighty Khmer civilisation.

Egypt gave us the beginning of the story, with its temples and tombs at Thebes and its use of the Nile floods for crops. Probably the most dramatic thing we saw from the air was the narrow strip of fertile land in the middle of the desert, twisting and turning with the Nile.

Now there only remains to be filmed the latest developments in the problem of the mail service to North Africa, the flying boats and composite aircraft which are being built at Rochester. The North Atlantic has been conquered by the pioneers, but has yet to be tamed by a regular mail service, and it is the beginnings of this service which will form the climax of our film.

# THE MIRACLE OF MIGRATION

## by Patricia Hutchins

## A UFA Film

FOR the first time the mystery of those long journeys undertaken by more than half the entire bird population, has been put vividly before you and me and the man next door.

Ornithology is still for many people just another long name suggesting unused books and coloured plates. Dr. Ulrich Schulz and the UFA expedition to the state bird observatory in Heligoland have not only made a series of discoveries but what is more, rendered the work of this state biological institute of popular interest.

The first part of their film shows birds of many species from swallow and nightingale to the eagle, feeding their young or searching for insects. Waterhens on the Swiss lakes during their winter stay and a blackbird scratching among the frosted leaves, leads to the food problem of the winter months and its solution.

When trees and hedges are dark with the companies of song-birds on their way south and flocks of starlings are gathering everywhere, work begins in real earnest at the Observatory in Heligoland. Thousands of birds pass in an hour and many are caught in the special garden traps which look rather like wire fruit-bush enclosures.

### Curiosity in 15th century

The first attempt to ring swallows was in 1477 and to-day word sometimes comes from as far as South Africa of birds which have been ringed and weighed as the film shows, and then set free. In this way it is known, for instance, that the thrush goes to the Atlantic coasts and the Mediterranean; from the Arctic comes the sea swallow, who has reared her young during the season of the midnight sun, on her great twenty-week journey to the South Pole. From these observations made all over the world an atlas of migratory routes has been made. Although some travel by day the largest number of birds fly by night. The wide beams of the lighthouse swing out dramatically into the darkness making the countless flocks of birds, attracted by its powerful lamps, look like the motes in a dusty shaft of light.

Storks from East Prussia have provided the most interesting experiment of recent years in which the camera plays an important part. High above the roof tops, from a nest built on a tall chimney, the young birds move their wings tentatively as the parents start teaching them to fly in June. The film gives a particularly beautiful impression of their flight when eventually they are ready to take part in the great migration which commences in August. A number of young storks were transported from Rossitten (an observatory on the great eastern bird route for the Balkans, Asia Minor and Africa) and set free at Essen on the west side of the Weser. Instead of following the western route via Gibraltar, they deliberately re-crossed the Weser and took the way their parents and remote ancestors had always done.

Migration has for centuries been a source of superstition and of all birds the crane has proved the most elusive to scientific documentation. With few exceptions, these birds do not live in Germany but stop there on their way to Africa from Sweden and Finland. A special microphone and powerful long distance lens capable of close-ups at 150 metres, enabled Dr. Schulz and his assistants to secure an authentic record of their habits, in spite of the poor light in October and the difficulties of effective concealment.

### Bird prospectors

The results obtained show that certain birds fly ahead to prospect a landing ground for the main party. Once arrived they tend to break up into groups representative of their home districts as they search about for food. A shrill note has often been detected as the cranes flew overhead like a great squadron and it was said that smaller birds travelled on their backs. The film proves that the sound comes from the younger birds whose vocal organs are not fully developed.

The following morning by two a.m. the party were already in their skilfully prepared hiding place to record the first cries of the birds as they began to leave their camp on the desolate marshes about four o'clock. Some of the cranes had kept awake all night as if on watch and three or four are seen to start before the others. The misty fields in the half light provide an eerie background to the loud cries of the birds which grow in volume as group after group take off. Soon they can be seen flying into the distance in that wedgeshape formation which considerably lessens air resistance, starting yet another stage of their journey southward.

### Sensitive approach

Another documentary called *Nimrod of the Camera* by Dr. Schulz shares the same excellent photography and sensitive but never sentimental approach to natural life.

When special apparatus has been carefully concealed in the undergrowth and the trees, the film shows the observers ready to shoot. A red kite feeding its young, a kingfisher carrying its catch and a number of other birds which are seldom seen are followed by the amusing efforts of fledgelings to leave their nest for neighbouring branches. The stalkers have also been fortunate in catching glimpses of the rare and timid black stork. Perhaps their greatest triumph was the recording of the mating cries of the woodcock in the early morning.

These unusual stars are strange and interesting enough but for many people the most fascinating sequences will be those in which the timid creatures of the sunlight-streaked woods go about their business unconcernedly: the rather pompous badger setting out from home, the vixen returning with the results of a successful hunt, the cubs playing under the beech trees.

# THE FIGHT FOR REALISM

*By*
*JOHN GRIERSON*

*This article forms part of a treatise on The Realist Film written for the book "Footnotes to the Film" which will be published by Lovat Dickson towards the end of May.*

*Charles Davy, of the "London Mercury" and the "Yorkshire Post" edits this book and it will include contributions on the various departments of film by Alfred Hitchcock, Basil Dean, Sidney Bernstein, Cavalcanti, Graham Greene, Forsyth Hardy, Robert Donat and others.*

DRIVEN by economics into artifice the cinema has stayed there for other equally effective reasons. It has never been quite sure of itself, never quite believed in its separate and original destiny. This, no doubt, is the price we have paid for being a new art, but the fact that we have been so largely in the hands of international traders and salesmen, may have operated too. Great qualities they have brought: fervour and excitement to the salesmanship of cinema and a certain extravagance to our spectacle. But social confidence and an easy acceptance of the right to social observation should hardly be claimed for many of those otherwise brilliant men who have built up the cinema. Esprit they have had, but hardly spirit. The reason may lie in the international salesman's alienation by nature from the basic life of the countries he exploits, but the factor is there, still haunting us and inhibiting us in every studio.

Be this as it may, the long neglect of the cultural world, and the absence of certain upper social strata from its nickelodeons and palaces, has confirmed in the cinema a lackeyish spirit which has put a premium on established celebrity and prevented the thought of discussing any issues close to the public life. Even now, when kings and princes sidle, like their servants, into the dress circle, and Mayfair socialites crowd the free buffets of West End premières, we film folk have not yet lost our fear of the ordinary. We would sacrifice our life for it and, so far as the British cinema is concerned, have. It is said of one of our best known producers that before each production runs the ghost of a Mayfair audience. Great help it has been to realism. To exploit the powers of natural observation; to build a picture of reality; to bring cinema to its destiny as a social commentator, inspirator and art; to make it bite into the time and, from its independent vantage, contribute to the articulation of the time—that, one may imagine, has been difficult in the circumstances.

## The Why of Artifice

Here is the key to any consideration of the realist cinema. It explains why, for the most part, we have clung to artifice and the synthetic. It explains the particular and especial diffidence of our British cinema people towards the local censor and why poor dear censor Wilkinson, with his Blake's poetry and his beloved pre-Raphaelites, has, in the jungle of Wardour Street, the strength of ten. Great figure he is, for on his charming old shoulders he carries the burden of our servility and our shame. Created by the Trade as an image of gratuitous fright, it is not surprising that his slogan of "No Controversy"—which to philosophy and all the world is "No Reality"—is abjectly obeyed.

This lackeyism explains, too, why there are so many sore heads in Wardour Street to-day. For America has at least developed, and her films are rolling in touching reality at last. The younger and braver generation of the Zanucks has begun to speak. We are mentioning unemployment, taking a stand on injustice, doing a little here and there to scourge the follies of our time. We are at last beginning to mention life as it is ordinarily lived. We are touching religion which is banned from us and mentioning the name of God. We are discussing in *March of Time* the problems and controversies of our generation.

Heads, as I say, are sore. An innocent account of the League of Nations is emasculated. A film about Peace is stopped in its tracks and only the greater spirit and sense of social responsibility of the newspapers secures its release. There is a strident note of distress in a dozen quarters because a film about nutrition merely says what every national newspaper has already printed, and political ward-heelers interfere and threaten. Worried we are, even in this day and age, and I fear will be more so as this reality grows. It will take a long time to exorcise our craven beginnings.

## Most Natural and Real

So, looking down the history of the actuality films, of what has seemed on the surface most natural and most real, there has been, until recently, a lack of fibre. From the beginning we have had newsreels, but dim records they seem now of only the evanescent and the essentially unreal, reflecting hardly anything worth preserving of the times they recorded. In curiosity one might wish to see again the Queen's Jubilees and the Delhi Durbars—with coloured kilts that floated in air a full yard behind the line of march—the Kaiser at manœuvres and the Czar at play. Once Lenin spoke, here and there early aeroplanes made historic landings and war cameras recorded, till war cameras recorded again, the vast futility of the dead. Exceptional occasions, yes, and the greatest shot I ever saw came out of it with the *Blucher* heeling over and the thousand men running, sliding, jumping over the lurching side to their death—like flies. A fearful and quiet shot. Among the foundation stones, the pompous parades, the politicians on pavements, and even among the smoking ruins of mine disasters and the broken backs of distressed ships, it is difficult to think that any real picture of our troubled day has been recorded. The newsreel has gone dithering on, mistaking the phenomenon for the thing-in-itself, and ignoring everything that gave it the trouble of conscience and penetration and thought.

The newsreel as we have had it for a generation is rushing breathlessly to oblivion. In its place, as any critic worth the name has long expected, something more intelligent and penetrating already arrives. It has crashed through from the America that succeeded the slump and learned with Roosevelt the simple braveries of the public forum. It is called *The March of Time* to-day, but to-morrow, so strong is the growth, so strong the need and so different the younger generation which handles cinema, it will be called by a dozen names—Window on the World, World Eye, Brave New World, and what not. It may or may not be significant that *The March of Time* is of all adventures in cinema the most patently native and American. Certainly it does what the other news records have failed to do. It gets behind the news, observes the factors of influence and gives a perspective to events. Not the parade of armies so much as the race in armaments; not the ceremonial opening of a dam but the full story of Roosevelt's experiment in the Tennessee Valley; not the launching of the *Queen Mary* but the post-War record of British shipping. All penetrating and, because penetrating, dramatic.

## Free-born Comment

There if anywhere to-day a chapter is being written in the realist use of the cinema. Only three years old, it has swept through the country answering the thin glitter of the newsreels with nothing on the face of it more dramatic than the story of cancer research, the organisation of peace, the state of Britain's health, the tithe war in the English shires, the rural economy of Ireland, with here and there a bright and ironic excursion into Texas centennials and the lunatic fringes of politics: in no deep sense conscious of the higher cinematic qualities, it merely carries over from journalism into cinema, after thirty-eight years, something of that bright and easy tradition of free-born comment which the newspaper has won and the cinema has been too abject even to ask for. There are proper limits, it is true, to freedom of speech which the cinema must regard. Its power is too great for irresponsible comment, when circulations like *March of Time's* may run to nine thousand theatres across an explosive world. But it seems sensible for the moment that *March of Time* has won the field for the elementary principles of public discussion. The world, our world, appears suddenly and brightly as an oyster for the opening: for film people—how strangely—worth living in, fighting and making drama about. More important still is the thought of a revitalised citizenship and of a democracy at long last in contact with itself. It seems only foolish that the party politics of blue, pink, red and yellow poke up a nose with every dictum of the censor and emasculate a vital factor in the national well being. But there it is, and we have only begun to face the issue now. Says Paul Valery "Political conflicts distort and disturb the people's sense of distinction between matters of importance and matters of urgency. What is vital is disguised as what is merely a matter of well being; the ulterior is disguised by the imminent; the badly needed by what is readily felt. All that touches practical politics is necessarily superficial."

# CINEMA *in the* SERVICE *of* RELIGION

by

## The FILM COUNCIL

**Quietly the churches have been entering the field of film production. With forty films a year and more than forty thousand halls at their disposal, they become a factor of ever-growing importance in the story of British cinema. This is the first public summary of their work.**

RECENT efforts to organise and supply films for the vast market represented by the innumerable churches, parish halls, missions and religious social service institutions in this country, have proceeded at such pace and attained such remarkable results that it is of interest to discover the organisations and aims behind them. If we leave aside the wider problem of the attitude of the churches to films in general and confine ourselves to the sphere of non-theatrical distribution, we are mainly concerned with the activities of two organisations: the *Religious Film Society* and the *Catholic Film Society*. Both are frankly propaganda organisations. The Religious Film Society was founded in 1933 to sponsor the use of the film "in the service of Christ and His Church." It is an inter-denominational organisation mainly supported by the Anglican and Nonconformist churches. The Catholic Film Society was formed in 1934 "with the object of teaching Catholic doctrine through the medium of the film" in collaboration with the Catholic Truth Society.

The Religious Film Society is a voluntary, non-commercial organisation drawing its revenue from personal donations, contributions from churches and the subscriptions, ranging from half-a-guinea a year upwards, of the 300 odd members of its fund-raising body known as the "Guild of Light." Its main officers are Thomas E. Marks, J.P., A.S.I., Chairman; J. Arthur Rank, D.L., J.P., Hon Treasurer; Rev. B. Gregory, D.Litt., Hon. Secretary; and Rev. S. W. Edwards, General Secretary. The financial resources of this body are indicated by the fact that up to 1936 it spent over £18,000 on the production of its first five sound films (three 2 reelers, one 3 and one 4-reeler) "mainly through the generous financial assistance of Mr. J. Arthur Rank." In 1936 a wide fund-raising campaign was initiated with the object of establishing a central institution with studios, training facilities, administrative headquarters, etc.

The R.F.S. works in the closest collaboration with the *Cinema Christian Council*, founded in May 1935 under the auspices of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is also its president, its vice-presidents being the Archbishop of York, the President of the National Free Church Council and the Moderator of the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches. Sir James Marchant, Mr. F. W. Baker and Mr. John Maxwell act as hon. advisers to this body which also received a grant of £500 from the governors of the B.F.I. in 1935/6. While the C.C.C. is mainly concerned with the wider aspects of the attitude of the churches to films, it also established an experimental production unit, known as the "C" Unit. The formal fusion of the Religious Film Society and the Cinema Christian Council is stated to be imminent. These organisations collaborating with the object of establishing a central institution, with studio, training facilities, administrative headquarters, etc.

The Catholic Film Society is "purely an amateur Society" working in two units, production and projection, and also hiring out its films through the Catholic Truth Society film library. Its president is the Rt. Rev. Francis McNulty, Bishop of Nottingham, its chairman the Rev. Ferdinand Valentine, O.P. Membership is open to all catholic amateurs, ordinary members paying 10/-, associate members 2/6 annually. Its additional revenue is derived from private donations, the hiring fees from its film displays (2 gns. for a 2 hour programme, 30/- for 1½ hour programmes), and from the receipts of shows organised on its own account.

**Joseph Arthur Rank, D.L., J.P.**

### Production Activities

The first five films of the Religious Film Society, already mentioned were produced by arrangement with commercial studios at an average cost of from £3,000 to £4,000. About 15 months ago the society began to set up its own production unit with technical equipment for 35 mm. sound production using the Wray-Coussell recording system. This unit has already produced one film and has two others under production at the present time, while the making of additional films is supported by the society through the supply of film stock to missionaries abroad and similar persons. The society is at present negotiating for the acquisition of premises in South London to be used as a fully equipped studio.

The films already produced in these ways are: *Mastership*, *Inasmuch*, *Barrabas* (2 reels); *Service* (3 reels); *The Common Round* (4 reels); *Peter Smith* (4 reels); *Zambesi Days* (3 reels, 16mm silent); *The Gold of Sheba* (2 reels, silent); *Frontiers of the Kingdom* (2 reels, 16mm silent).

While the last three films are examples of work supplied by missionaries abroad, the following notes taken from the society's catalogue will indicate the character of some of the other films:

"*Inasmuch:* A story from the life of St. Francis of Assisi, with a simple message of love and charity sincerely presented."

"*Service:* George Carter endeavours, with the help of a blind man, Stonnard, to dedicate his life to the service of Christ, but the first time he meets temptation, he falls. His conscience gives him no peace till he has made restitution and his experiences leave him strengthened for a further endeavour to live a life of service."

The two films at present in production are entitled *Te Deum* and *Tyndale*. The former is a documentary presentation of the usage of the Church's oldest hymn, while the latter is a partly docementary, partly biographical film, planned as 5 or 6 reeler, of the life of the Bible translator. Future plans stress the importance of dramatic story films on biblical, church-historical and modern themes, in addition to documentary material. The society is continually receiving scripts for such subjects from the most varied sources, and about a hundred offers of service on a non-commercial basis from technicians and actors have been made to it since the establishment of its own unit.

The "C" Unit of the Cinema Christian Council has produced the following films (all 16mm silent):

*Lost Opportunities* (1 reel); *Newsreel* (holiday, nursery school, religious conference etc., scenes, 1 reel); *Pilots* (2 reels); *Tiny Feet* (2 reels); *The Royal Scot* (1 reel); *York* (1 reel).

Michelangelo's Creation of Man, from the Sistine Chapel

The unit was planned as an amateur body producing silent substandard films, suitable for the illustration of sermons and for use in mission halls. A church hall in Poplar has been fitted as a studio for it. While the appeal of some of these films is similar to that of the R.F.S. list, a somewhat different approach is indicated in the following:

"*Pilots:* Document of the River Thames River Pilots and Channel Pilots, and the purpose of its making is to provide a mental stimulus and background to an address on the necessity of a spiritual Pilot."

"*York:* Documentary film suitable for church services. Notes can be supplied. Aim to show that Christianity is an 'abiding presence.' The Walls, Bars, and River are shown—also the Minster at which the convocation is meeting. Outside notice of Memorial to King George V and Proclamation is read on steps."

The *Missionary Film Committee* has produced films on Africa, India, China, Japan and Palestine, one of which is also available as a 35 mm sound film.

Turning from the protestant group to the Catholic Film Society, we find a list of about a dozen silent 16mm films, all except one (which was obtained from America) having been produced by various amateur members of this organisation. The films are illustrations of the Sacraments, of the lives of the religious orders, or documentaries of more general religious interest, seven of them were produced in 1936.

The titles are: *Baptism*, *Sick Call*, *Morning Offering*, *Matrimony*, *Retreats for Boys*, *Night Prayers*, *Dominican Mass*, *Dominicans of Woodchester*, *Mount Melleray*, *Just for To-day*, *Franciscans of Guildford*, *Aran of the Saints*. (The film *The Holy Mass* is an American production).

The following notes will illustrate the general character of the "sacrament" series:

"*Sacrament of Holy Matrimony:* Made by Fr. Francis Young and entirely acted by parishioners of the Catholic Church at Downham, Kent. The film shows the circumstances attending mixed marriage and marriage in a registry office, which is plainly condemned as 'Disobedience to God,' and then proceeds to show the details of Nuptial Mass."

The society is at present producing a film on Catholic Youth in Industry, to be called *Great Awakening*. "Mr. Terence McArdle, the producer, explains that the intention is to create interest in England for a movement similar to the J.O.C. (Jeunes Ouvriers Catholiques) in Belgium, adapted, of course, to national temperament and requirements. An English Catholic Industrial Club for Young Workers, providing opportunities for exchange of ideas, for sport and for social activities would be at least one way of combating the ever active Communist propaganda and would give the young Catholic in factory and workshop a sense of background and support against the all-powerful weapon so difficult for youth to withstand—ridicule" (announcement of the C.F.S.).

## Distribution

The distribution activities of both the main groups include the maintenance of film libraries from which owners of projectors can hire films and of demonstration services in which operators with projectors provide complete programmes for non-equipped halls.

The library of the protestant group at present contains some 25 films, including some produced outside the group, especially the silent version of *Livingstone*—this is stated to be the most popular picture in the whole library—and *The Ancient City of Canterbury*.

During the current season the R.F.S. has made an arrangement with *Sound Services Ltd.* who have already given 1,800 shows of a set programme in churches, mission halls, etc., throughout the country.

## Grants for Projectors

The R.F.S., moreover, directly assists churches and similar institutions who desire to purchase projectors. Since its foundation it has made about 120 monetary grants for this purpose. The number of such institutions at present equipped is stated to be considerable, the society's secretary knows of some 600, but there must be many more.

During the season 1935/6 a total of 1,740 reels were hired from the Catholic Truth Society film library, the displays of which were seen by over 30,000 people. During the same period the C.F.S. arranged 60 displays through their own projectors, and the number of these shows will be more than double during the present season (24 displays were given in January this year, as compared with 11 in 1936). In addition the society has arranged 5 displays on its own account in various town halls in Greater London. Finally there are regular monthly meetings with lectures and films shows in a London hall.

The R.F.S. is in correspondence with churches, etc., in some 33 other countries, including the Dominions, and has supplied copies of its films to Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. The Catholic Film Society is in contact with a similar movement in Belgium.

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# The National Pulse Beats in the Second-Feature

One is inclined, in reviewing the trend of films shown in this country, to consider only the big feature films as important. But for drawing conclusions bearing on social content, the second feature film is more reliable than the epic or feature picture.

The latter is generally a modish affair, elaborately unself-conscious, and baffling the sociologist with suave self-contradiction and paradox. The second feature, however, is a more spontaneous matter, springing from the eager desire of the producer to make cheap films that will sell. In these he is inclined to select a formula, based on some apparent popular need, and an indication of the national pulse.

The two national pulses of England and America, reflected in the second features are entirely different. For some reason or other the English Producer has decided that English audiences dislike any sort of realism, while the American producer concentrates on drawing his characterization, if not his situations, from life.

The English second feature is practically always frenziedly upper class. If it is a comedy, it is peopled with grotesque characters with whose facetious horseplay one is meant to maintain sympathy. Members of the aristocracy are presented with the intelligence of apes and a far lower moral standard. Their sense of humour finds an outlet in tiresome horseplay reminiscent of the dormitory rag. The mirthful *pièce de résistance* is the spectacle of the hero dressing up as a woman.

These characters do not live, and are not meant to live. Their imbecilities and their false beards are part of a monstrous charade which apparently hypnotise the public into troubled laughter. The fact that Lords and Honourables (provided with suitably atrocious dialogue) are presented in hideously ludicrous situations undoubtedly provides the easy-going public with a certain satisfaction that they do not live in manor houses, and talk and think like the residents of country seats.

It is worthwhile to quote the story summary of a British second feature film.

"*Jack Lawson is told by his mother to marry Ann Clifton, an heiress. He is actually in love with a girl called Betty Painton, and makes his friend Bob propose to Ann. Bob makes a mess of the job. Jack finds that he is officially betrothed to Ann. Jack and Bob retire to their country retreat and Betty and her brother (David) join them. Jack's mother is by now suspicious. Bob pretends to have jaundice and telegrams are sent to her to scare her away. But she arrives. So Betty and David pretend to be a nurse and doctor. Complications heighten, but all ends happily with Jack and Betty (who turns out to be an heiress) marrying, with Bob and Ann following suit.*"

Another characteristic of the British comedy (as in the *Compulsory Wife*: Warner) is in the sex-complication. An unmarried pair find themselves in close propinquity. Immediately the characters become inessential as characters, and serve as arch strip-teasers, undressing in immense bedrooms. There is never any reality in the proceedings. This is the crudest example of giving the public what it wants at the expense of realistic narrative.

The charade atmosphere not only embraces fun and bedrooms but decides the value of "crook" dramas. We are always in a nest of hollow gentlemen with immense incomes, living or dying in large libraries of sumptuously furnished country houses. The women try painstakingly to be sophisticated, when they have nothing to be sophisticated about. The drama is built upon an entirely synthetic structure, relying upon its power to bluff the public, rather than to construct values for it.

The American second feature film usually draws its characters from life. They are human beings, not pegs for "funny dialogue."

The American second feature draws on the mass man and woman to represent the issues of their stories. Salesmen, Plumbers, Engineers, and workers of all descriptions realistically go about their business as though it was their business and they lived by it. We are taken with ease from hotel to kitchen, from theatre lobby to road gang. The films may not be in many respects remarkable, but they abound with people, who compared with the British Quota-ghosts, are terribly alive. They seem to have a skeleton, and a brain and a purpose.

The second feature films, given human treatment, may become best features (as in the case of *The Thin Man*). This is because the producer has decided to use intelligence in the treatment of his subject, in his casting and his general use of the film medium. He has not employed a formula, the box-office formula for laughter or tears, but he has real enthusiasm for the potentialities of his story and his medium. He has not allowed himself to be limited by the "second feature" mentality.

There is no reason in the world why any subject, made for however relatively small a sum, should not equal the most ambitious epic. It is a mere question of values. When the second feature producer turns to real people for his characterization, he will make a real picture. When he refuses to employ clichés and artificial situations, and determines to get down to earth, he is already on the way to making a first-class film, if not a first-feature one. The nominal distinction should not worry him in the least.

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## *Historical Biography*

The list of historical biography films published in the March issue of *W.F.N.* has caused a lively correspondence from readers eager to share with us their specialised knowledge on the subject. We are very grateful for their interest and, for future use, shall welcome any corrections or additions our readers may contribute.

Conceived as a purely preliminary summary to accompany the article discussing the recent biography craze in the same issue, the list was a tentative one. One of the most serious omissions, due to the source from which much of the earlier information had to be taken—the successive issues of the *Kinematograph Yearbook*—is that of the director in many of the earlier productions. In this way the pioneer work of Maurice Elvey, *e.g.*, for historical films in England, remained completely unnoted. Again, in the absence of personal knowledge of many of the older films a good deal of research is still required to make the list consistent in its definition of historical biography.

We hope, however, that the start we have made will lead to a satisfactory result and that, with the help of its readers, *W.F.N.* will soon be able to publish in a special leaflet a more detailed and consistent guide to a sphere of the film as vast, as it is interesting. The publication of this leaflet will be announced on its completion and copies will be available on request.

Bound volumes of the first twelve issues of *W.F.N.* may be obtained from The World Film News, 217-218 Temple Chambers, Temple Avenue, E.C.4, price £1. 1*s.* post free, or 7*s.* 6*d.* post free if copies are supplied. Back numbers are available.

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# PEOPLE OF THE STUDIOS

## Denham

*Bicycle for Two*, an all-colour musical, is to be made by Victor Saville and presented by London Films. The story, written by R. C. Sheriff from an original idea of Alexander Korda, deals with the Naughty Nineties; but although a costume piece, it will be treated with modern musical technique, slick dialogue and orchestration in modern rhythm.

*Action for Slander*, first picture on the new Denham production schedule, was adapted from Mary Borden's novel by Miles Malleson and Ian Dalrymple. The cast is headed by Clive Brook. Victor Saville directs.

*The Squeaker*, Edgar Wallace thriller now shooting, sets a new, and perhaps safe line for Korda. Two stars—Edmund Lowe and Elizabeth Allan—have been brought over from the States, and Sebastian Shaw also plays. Bryan Wallace wrote the script, and William K. Howard, responsible for *Fire Over England*, is directing.

Herbert Wilcox, production chief at Pinewood, has made a move towards co-operation by filming *Victoria the Great* at Denham. He has also been negotiating with Ned Depinet of R.K.O. Radio, and a deal has been concluded by which the film will be distributed by Radio throughout the world, with the exception of Germany.

Wilcox himself directs *Victoria the Great*, which concentrates on the intimate love story of the young Victoria (Anna Neagle) and Prince Albert (Anton Walbrook), and finishes with a pageant of the events of the reign, to be filmed in technicolor.

Ned Mann, former chief of Denham's special effects department, left recently for a holiday in the U.S.A. He will return later in the year as associate producer with Korda, and work on a picture tentatively titled *The Steel Line*. Lawrence Buler, who invented many of the *Things to Come* models, will be the new special effects chief.

## Pinewood

With the whole unit back from the Egyptian desert where seven weeks location work has been completed, studio work began early in April on the Capitol-Buckingham film *Jericho*, with Paul Robeson, Henry Wilcoxon, Wallace Ford and Princess Kouka. The film exposed in the desert was processed almost within the shadow of the Pyramids, and the "rushes" viewed in a hall covered with ancient tapestries, but equipped with Western Electric Wide Range. Thornton Freeland, who made *Flying Down to Rio*, *The Amateur Gentleman* and *Accused*, is directing and Walter Futter producing; John Boyle is at the cameras. Musical numbers by Michael Carr and Jimmy Kennedy.

New Jessie Matthews picture *Gangway*, under Sonnie Hale's direction, will soon be ready for cutting.

## Elstree

Associated British Picture Corporation has recently completed *Radio Revue of* 1937, a musical on the Hollywood pattern. Walter Mycroft produced, and Graham Cutts, responsible for *Aren't Men Beasts*, directed. The cast includes Buddy Rogers, June Clyde, Claire Luce, Zelma O'Neill, Jack Jackson and his Band, Jack Melford and Oliver Wakefield. Michael Carr, composer of "Did Your Mother Come from Ireland," "Misty Islands of the Highlands," "Cowboy" and "Old Faithful," wrote the music in co-operation with Jimmy Kennedy.

## Isleworth

Criterion have preparations in hand for a re-start of *Flodden Field*, Scottish border story which was begun last year. Director Tay Garnett is at present making various back-projection seascapes, aided by his wife Helga Moray, one-time Hollywood star and reputed to be the only expert camera-woman in the world.

Raoul Walsh, director of *Thief of Bagdad*, *What Price Glory*, *The Bowery* and *Jump for Glory*, is back in England from Hollywood to make another film for Criterion.

## Beaconsfield

As yet untitled, Tudor Film's production "No. 5" went on the floor last month. The Marquess of Ely, a director of the company, is producing, and Herbert Brenon directs. Jean Gillie and Bernard Nedell are the stars.

Following its completion, a new Sandy Powell subject is scheduled by British Lion, to be made in conjunction with Tom Arnold.

## Ealing

Edmond Greville, the English-French director of *Marchand D'Armour*, has returned to English studios. He is making *Brief Ecstasy* for Phoenix Films. Paul Lukas, Hungarian-born Hollywood actor, plays the lead, and Hugh Perceval produces.

## Wembley

*Confidentially Yours* with Naughton and Gold is now in production.

## Cricklewood

Dallas Bower, late assistant to Dr. Paul Czinner and now television producer at Alexandra Palace, is producing a film here for television propaganda purposes. Sponsored by the B.B.C., it will be an elaborate production dealing with the history of television. All settings used in the production will be specially constructed with a view to their future use at Alexandra Palace in the ordinary televised programmes.

Alan Lawson, chief cameraman to Baird television, originally cameraman at A.T.P. Studios, will be responsible for photography.

## Teddington

Irving Asher is producing *Change for a Sovereign* (original title *Sand in the Sugar*), written by and starring Sir Seymour Hicks.

* * *

"Midnight With the Stars," variety-revue staged by the Cinematograph Trade Benevolent Fund, will take place at the Empire Theatre, Leicester Square, on May 6th. Those who have agreed to appear include Annabella, Yvonne Arnaud, Leslie Banks, Binnie Barnes, Jack Buchanan, Tullio Carminati, Claude Dampier, Tamara Desni, Flanagan and Allen, George Formby, Robertson Hare, Gordon Harker, Will Hay, Leslie Henson, Sydney Howard, Gertrude Lawrence, Vivien Leigh, Ralph Lynn, Gina Malo, Jessie Matthews, Naughton and Gold, Nervo and Knox, Laurence Olivier, Vic Oliver, Lilli Palmer, Nova Pilbeam, Flora Robson, Conrad Veidt and Tom Walls. These names, however, will be supplemented by others. Tickets range from 5/- to 10 guineas, and it is hoped to raise £15,000 on behalf of the fund.

# *People of the Studios* (contd.)

## America

Hunt Stromberg, responsible for the forthcoming *Night Must Fall*, is to produce a Jeanette McDonald film—*The Firefly*.

* * *

Sidney Franklin, director of *The Good Earth*, has signed a new contract with M.G.M. Franklin has been associated with the company for many years, and directed *The Barretts of Wimpole Street*, *Reunion in Vienna*, *Smilin' Through* and *Private Lives*.

W. S. Van Dyke has also re-signed with M.G.M. His *Thin Man* won the Academy Prize in 1935: his latest pictures—*After the Thin Man*, *San Francisco* and *Man in Possession*.

Franchot Tone and Spencer Tracy are in his present film *They Gave Him a Gun*.

* * *

Interest at Paramount has been centred chiefly on the new picture *Angel*, which began early last month. After *Knight Without Armour*, Marlene Dietrich returns once again to the direction of Ernst Lubitsch. The action of the film takes place in Paris and London, and cameramen have been in England taking shots of Ascot race course and the departure platform at Victoria, from which to re-construct sets in Hollywood.

Paramount's line-up for the coming season also includes a group of series subjects. At the moment it has in production a *Fu Manchu* series, with Akim Tamiroff as Fu; a group of Sophie Lang "female Raffles" thrillers for Gail Patrick; a sequence of stories for Lynne Overman and Roscoe Karns, who continue as they started in *Murder Goes to College* (present film: *Murder Goes to Jail*); more Bulldog Drummond stories with Kay Milland in the title rôle; further Zane Grey adventures with Larry Crabbe; and more of the *Hopalong Cassidy* action romances with Bill Boyd.

* * *

In competition with nearly every other producer in Hollywood, Walter Wanger has secured screen rights of the *Saturday Evening Post* serial "Stand In," written by Clarence Buddington Kelland, author of "Mr. Deeds." The story is of Hollywood, and Wanger has been searching for counterparts of famous stars to give an atmosphere of reality. Leslie Howard is to play the lead.

* * *

First of three biographical films of famous composers scheduled in Hollywood will be *Chopin*, to be made at Columbia. Frank Capra starts direction on June 1st, with Francis Lederer. Sidney Buchman is now working on the script.

* * *

Fred Astaire and Carol Lombard, reputed to be the highest salaried team in Hollywood, co-star in *Damsel in Distress*. Picture starts after Astaire finishes *Shall We Dance*, in which he appears with Ginger Rogers. Miss Lombard will be temporarily released from her Paramount contract, calling for nine pictures in three years.

* * *

A spate of civil war stories is being prepared in Hollywood. Following the announcements that Paramount were filming *Gettysburg* and Selznick International had bought the rights of *Gone with the Wind*, three other lots began a hunt for stories with a similar background. M.G.M. plans a remake of *The Crisis* (originally produced in 1916) and Warners have quickened activity on *Jezebel*. Twentieth Century-Fox is also interested, although their Shirley Temple picture *The Littlest Rebel* had a Blue and Grey background.

*Gettysburg*, $1,000,000 picture of the three-day battle, will be produced by Albert Lewin, associated for many years with the late Irving Thalberg. This is his first picture under the Paramount banner. Henry Hathaway, famous for his *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, will direct, with American playwright Clifford Odets writing the screen play and dialogue from an adaption of McKinlay Kantor's book. Fred MacMurray is set for the lead.

*Gone With the Wind*, novel by Margaret Mitchell which David Selznick secured after scanning the galley proofs and which is now considered the most valuable book property in Hollywood, is to be filmed by director George Cukor. After completing it, Cukor announces he will direct Garbo in her first comedy.

* * *

Sam Goldwyn has scheduled eight pictures for 1937, to cost £2,000,000, which he personally will supervise and finance. *Woman Chases Man*, with Miriam Hopkins and Joel McCrea, is the first on the list; director: John G. Blystone. Preparations are complete for production of *Hurricane*, to feature Margo and Raymond Massey and written by the authors of *Mutiny on the Bounty*. The film is budgeted to cost £300,000, and will bring together the team responsible for *The Informer*—director John Ford and script writer Dudley Nichols. Much of the film is to be shot in settings of the South Sea Islands.

At the same time Goldwyn will make *Stella Dallas*, with Barbara Stanwyck and John Boles. King Vidor, last associated with Goldwyn for *Street Scene* will be borrowed from Paramount to direct. To follow is *Dead End*, study of gangster life, with Sylvia Sydney, Joel McCrea and Humphrey Bogart. It is adapted from the New York stage success for which Goldwyn payed £33,000. Later will come *The Goldwyn Follies*, a costly musical with Adolphe Menjou.

Gary Cooper's first film under his Goldwyn contract will be *The Adventures of Marco Polo*, which Douglas Fairbanks Senior will co-produce. Cooper will then play with Merle Oberon in a film for which Frederick Lonsdale is writing the script.

* * *

Hollywood's latest title changes: *The Woman's Touch* to *Woman Chases Man*; *A New Trail Ahead* becomes *Two-Gun Law;* the Leslie Howard-Olivia de Haviland picture, *The Love Derby*, is now *He Wouldn't Get Married; Skidding* has been altered to *A Family Affair; Dead Yesterday* is to be released as *The Great Hospital Mystery*.

* * *

The following are translations of American titles :—

No More Ladies—La Femme de sa Vie.
She Married Her Boss—Mon Mari le Patron.
She Couldn't Take It—La Manière Forte.
Love Before Breakfast—Ce Que Femme Veut.
Early to Bed—Vingt Ans de Fiancailles.

* * *

When *Camille* was still at the Empire, production was well advanced on *Madame Walewska*. Greta Garbo, who as a rule takes long holidays between her pictures, plays Marie Walewska, whose love affair with Napoleon is one of the most romantic episodes in the First Consul's career. Charles Boyer, recently seen in *Mayerling*, *The Garden of Allah* and *History is Made at Night*, plays Napoleon, and Reginald Owen is Talleyrand. Screen play by S. N. Behrman is from a novel by Gasiorowski. Clarence Brown directs and Bernard Hyman produces.

**Back to Lubitsch**

* * *

Buddy Ebson is once again with Metro-Goldwyn for comedy dance numbers in the new edition of *Broadway Melody*. Sid Silvers and Jack McGowan wrote the original story, and the latter the screen play. The principal names are Eleanor Powell, Robert Taylor, Binnie Barnes and Sophie Tucker.

* * *

Four days shooting behind *Broadway Melody of* 1937 is *The Emperor's Candlesticks*, Baroness Orczy novel at Metro studios, co-starring Luise Rainer and William Powell for the third time. George Fitzmaurice is the director, and John Considine Junior producer.

* * *

## France

*Pepé Le Moko* is one of the most interesting films made in France for a long time. Although the whole film was shot in the studio on a single large set, it reproduces the authentic atmosphere of North Africa. The story is simple—the efforts of the French Police to entice Pepé, the gangster, out of his lair in the Kasbah. It moves rapidly and with infinite ingenuity. Pepé is perfectly played by Jean Gabin. The director is Duvivier.

Berthold Bartosch is making a new film in Paris, which will probably be finished in September. It is in Gasparcolor and the subject is The Creation of the World. In making this film, Bartosch is fulfilling a wish that he has had for many years. His colour effects which are most remarkable are based as far as possible on the stained glass in Chartres Cathedral.

Alexieff, the trick film maker, has been working on a number of advertisement pictures in Gasparcolor, for Paris firms. He works in France, but recently spent three months in Berlin.

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# People of the Studios (cont.)

## Austria

The Tobis studios in Vienna have recently re-opened, and two films are in production. Director E. W. Emo is making *Happiest Couple* with Wolf Albach Retty. Karl Lamac is shooting *Peter in the Snow* with Traudl Stark.

## Italy

Italy's new "Hollywood" recently broke into headlines when Mussolini paid it a visit and his son Vittorio wrote an article in a popular fan magazine, expressing a hope for the industry.

Of the 5,000,000 square feet of ground that constitute the Roman Film City, about a fifth is now covered with buildings in various stages of construction. The Duce made a tour of the entire premises. He was cheered by 1,500 workmen and thanked by picture executives for his boost to the industry.

* * *

Following a recent Chino-Italian pact for reciprocity on matters of film policy, the Italian Government has banned *The General Died at Dawn*. The Chinese legation objected to several sequences.

## Finland

Nyrki Tapiovaara, member of Helsingfors' art group, has answered the critics of *Fredlös* with *Juha*, a new film of the Finnish border.

Beloved of Helsingfors children for his brilliant waistcoats, Panama hat and yellow socks, Tapiovaara has previously devoted his time to travelogues and documentaries. For *Juha*, his first full length film, he chose a well-known Finnish story of an old husband whose young wife is loved by a handsome Russian; the magnificent scenery of northern Finland forms the setting. Northern critics have high praise for the film. Of particular interest, is the director's approach to political and social problems.

## Mexico

Felipe Mier, who left Warners two years ago to start a producing unit with his brother Fernando, has promised four featuré films, and Juan Pazet, head of a producing company bearing his name, has forecast "continuous production" starting this month.

Two big pictures at present in production are *Chicos de la Prensa* ("Press Boys"), at the Clasa studios, and *No te Enganes Corazon* ("Don't Deceive My Heart").

## Norway

George W. Willoughby, a young Norwegian, has been given the job of making a historical film of Polar Exploration, to be shown at the International Polar Exhibition in Bergen in 1940. The film will take three years to make and will be six reels in length. Willoughby is leaving shortly for Arctic territory where he will have the co-operation of the Norwegian Government in re-staging historical episodes and filming in general. He will not use professional actors, and will take a crew of only two or three men. Sound will be added in the studio later.

Willoughby has recently been in London investigating the possibility of completing the film in England, as sound facilities in Norway

"Juha"

are hard to obtain. All the film will be developed in Norway, however, as, strangely enough, laboratory costs are very much lower than here.

## Germany

While the Tobis, Grünewald, Templehof and Terra studios are in and near Berlin, traditional film ground in Germany is at Neubabelsberg where Ufa, recently taken over by the Government, claims to have studios and equipment that make poor relations of Denham and Pinewood. Work is now finishing on the last production of the season—a satirical comedy entitled *Mein Sohn, der Herr Minister* ("My Son, the Minister"), and the 1937/38 season begins with five films: *Patrioten* ("Patriots"), *Wenn Frauen Schweigen* ("When Women are Silent"), *Die Sieben Ohrfeigen* ("Seven Slaps"), *Starke Herzen* ("Stalwart Hearts"), and *Zü Neuen Ufern* ("Upon New Shores").

* * *

Richard Eichberg, Germany's Flaherty, has reported from India that outside shots have been completed for the two films *Der Tiger von Eschnapur* ("The Tiger of Eschnapur") and *Das Indische Grabmal* ("The Indian Tomb").

* * *

Jacques Feyder, of *La Kermesse Héroïque* (London's longest run for a foreign film) and *Knight Without Armour* (Donat-Dietrich), has now answered the call of Germany, and is scheduled to direct a circus film for Tobis, based on an idea of his own. Two versions are to be made: French and German.

* * *

O. E. Lubitz, once producer-manager for Bavaria and Atlanta Films, has formed a company with Styria-Film of Vienna, with offices in Berlin. First of four pictures for this year is *Fair and Warmer*, farce by Avery Hopwood, to be directed by Theo Lingen. Second film to be *Die Fledermaus*, the Strauss operetta. Renate Muller, one-time English star, takes the lead.

# MEETINGS AND ACQUAINTANCES

A small man marches into a Parisian salon, his head is shaved in the style of a Prussian officer, the cast of his face is reminiscent of a Gothic mask. He clicks his heels and shakes hands, his face is composed into enigmatic lines. Suddenly, in a faultless American accent, he offers whiskies and sodas. He toys with his glass, he begins to talk, the talk flows like the dialogue in one of those plays that some years ago were called superlative, ironic, caressing and violent by turns. It is barbed one moment with bitterness and swathed in diplomacy the next. It is the talk of a man of many parts. It is the actor ERICH VON STROHEIM.

**ERWIN SCHARF,** a Hungarian, is one of the leading Continental art Directors. He has worked in Spain, France, Holland, Germany, Switzerland and Austria. Having started in theatre he now does some practical architecture and has flats to his credit in Vienna. He art-directed for Max Ophüls in *The Bartered Bride* (Berlin) and for Kirsanov in *Rapt* (Switzerland), and he is now on his second British picture, a remake of the Viennese film *Man Without a Home*. The first British Film was *Street Singer*. In film, he believes that sets must be designed solely as a background, to give full camera movement ; rather than to be beautiful and static. His latest film was the last made in Madrid before war intervened. The cast was picked from the Spanish players of Fox Hollywood Studios which had given up making films for the South American market as Spanish native production had reached such a high pitch. (Rosita Diaz was one of this group of players, though she was working in Barcelona and not Madrid).

**JEAN LODS,** the French director, is probably best known for his two lively documentaries—*Le Mile*, the study of an athlete, and *La Seine*.

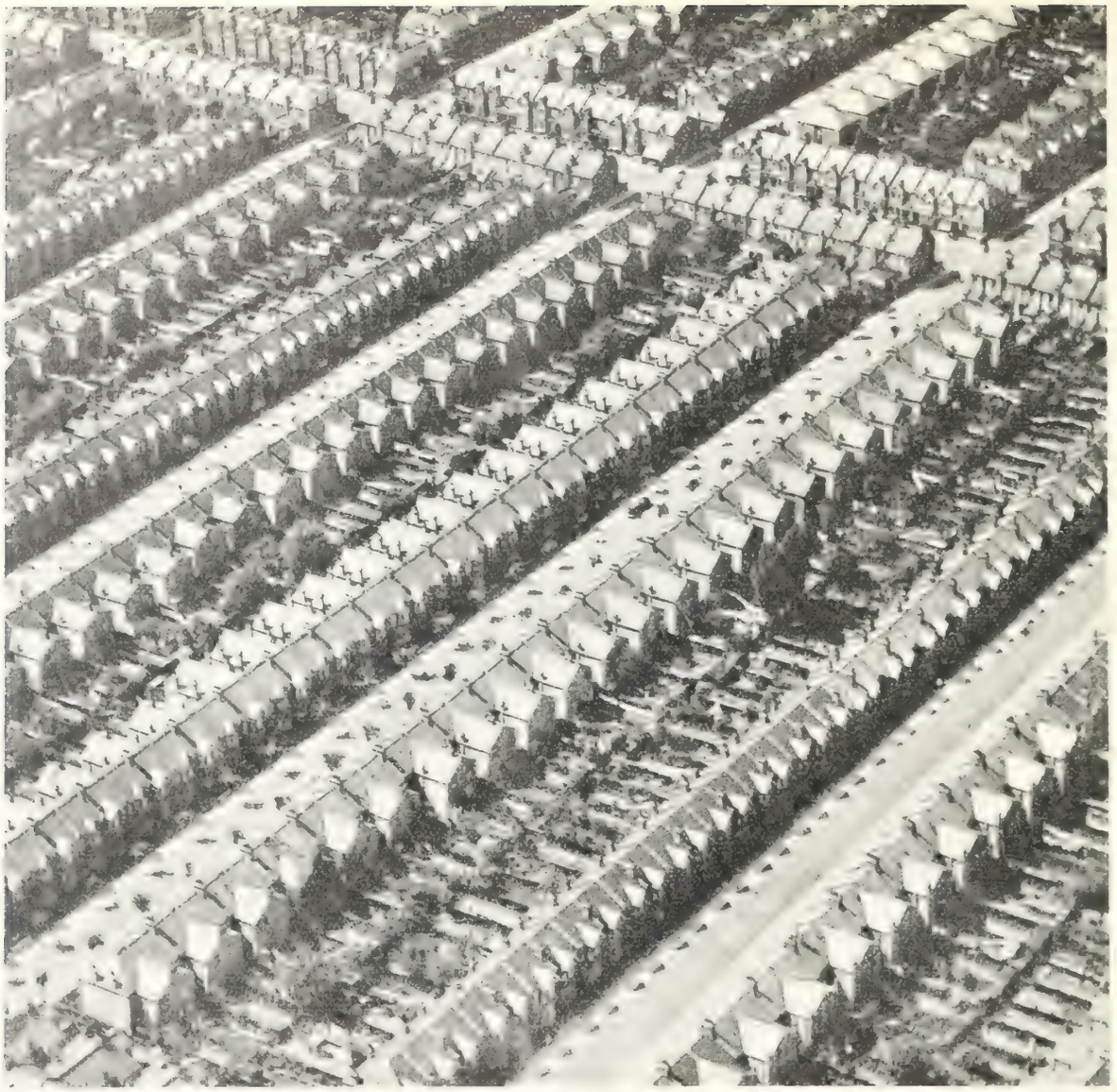
He now writes to Alberto Cavalcanti—

"I have been nearly two years here in Odessa, where you have just found me out. By request of the authorities, and on Stalin's own initiative, I made a documentary, *A Ma Manière* on Odessa I used the simplest means of expression—the whole time trying as hard as I could to bore as few people as possible.

"The result was a great number of proposals for scenarios for full-length films—some good, some bad, but none that worked out according to my ideas. I refused them all, and went on dutifully with my quest of the golden fleece. How magnificent for a director to be able to refuse scripts!

"For some time the factory has not been at its best. But now a set of marvellous people, full of ideas and with plenty of go, have come in on the direction—in which I take part. I am getting ready a full length film on the youth, who are far the most interesting element in the country,—a film I might almost call 'fantastico-realist.'

"I can't begin till the end of the year. Meanwhile, to set my youthful unit going, I am trying to get together a kind of soviet Mack Sennett company, to make a few short comics over the summer. It's a difficult problem. Can I do it? . . . ."



Tooting

*From "Why Aeroplanes Fly" (Longmans Green)*

# CINEMAS AND CEMETERIES

## An examination of the film goers of a typical London suburb

## THE TASTE OF TOOTING by Richard Carr

ONCE synonymous with suburban snobbery, Tooting to-day is a progressive and up-to-date suburb, contrasting favourably with its encircling neighbours, Balham and Wandsworth. As inner-London suburbs go, Tooting is fairly new: not so long ago, green fields abounded where now stand rows and rows of middle-class villas or streets of Council houses. Only in the older part of the suburb are there slums, bad ones too, slowly giving way before a continued and, at times, ferocious anti-slum campaign.

The population to-day is largely lower-middle and working class: the higher-ups have gradually moved further out as Council housing development has brought working-class people from the more crowded parts of London. Now its inhabitants are mainly office, shop, transport, printing and building workers, progressive in opinion and making the suburb a busy, lively and progressive area. It has no industries: unless cinemas and cemeteries be such.

For a population of 39,000 Tooting has seven cinemas. There are of course several others, on the outskirts of surrounding districts, within easy reach. Two of Tooting's seven are "supers," one a cine-news: the others date from earlier days and are correspondingly inadequate.

In old Tooting, there is a cinema which has claimed to be one of the first halls in London to show films. During its chequered career it has been music-hall, theatre, cinema; has closed and re-opened so often that the legend "under new management" might well be engraved on its walls, second in importance only to the cinema's name.

The exact date at which films were first shown at this theatre is uncertain but its type of programme certainly tends to take one back some years in movie history. Names appear on the programme strange to the new generation of cinema-goers. Serials are run here too, serials on the old model in which the hero is left for a whole week suspended over a precipice, or lying helpless before an oncoming express, or at the mercy of relentless enemies. The display bills, contrasting with the modernistic advertising of the "supers," are just long black-lettered lists of films: lists of westerns, of thrillers, of serials, of comedies, films not for an age but for all time.

Besides children and lads, appreciative of exciting films, a small and rather depressed audience visits this cinema. One fancies them lost, hovering helplessly between the cinemas they knew in the ill-lit, novelty days and the new "supers." These are neither the simple, easily satisfied audiences of the pre-war days, nor the sophisticated movie fans of to-day. Perhaps, too old or too tired to go farther than just round the corner to the pictures, or too conservative to accept change, or too dazed and bewildered by the luxury of the super and the speed and complexities of the modern film. Some are people from small provincial towns and villages who find the less luxurious cinema more like home. Much

### Suburb of Cinemas (cont.)

of this cinema's custom depends of course on children to whom the cheaper prices are essential or the straight films more interesting.

One of the "supers," Mr. Bernstein's Granada, is the Mecca of cinema-goers for miles round, though its regular patronage is built of Tooting people. It opens at twelve, and for sixpence, in the afternoon, you can sit in a comfortable seat in luxurious surroundings and get somewhere around three and a half hours of entertainment. Two full-length films, a newsreel, a comedy cartoon or short and stage shows varying from straightforward acts to "sensations" and "circuses" at holiday times. No circus being complete without horses, elephants, and acrobats, even these are to be seen on the Granada stage at Christmas time.

Mr. Bernstein treats his patrons well: offers them substantial fare, good seating and reasonable prices and asks their opinions on films and stars regularly. There are minor criticisms though; the length of the programme means that the last performance starts around seven-thirty, sometimes a few minutes earlier or later. For men or women some distance from their work, or for shop-assistants in the area, this means missing part of the performance: even for those who can with a scramble get there round about seven, there is often a long wait outside in the cold, or standing inside, none too pleasant after a day's work. This applies chiefly to the cheaper seats, the one-and-three and the ninepennies and it is worth Mr. Bernstein's while to give this some attention.

### Repertory

Perhaps the best comment on this is provided by the success of Tooting's newest venture: The Classic, a repertory cinema, where you can see the films you missed or those you liked well enough to see again. This cinema gives a two-and-a-half-hour show, one price only downstairs, sixpence. It was formerly a struggling independent cinema, bad lighting, bad screening, and bad sound diminishing its custom, its programmes being consequently limited. It has been renovated outside and in, seating and screening greatly improved, though the old structure has prevented it being all it should. One full length film is shown, the rest of the programme being made up of shorts, colour cartoons and news.

It opened with *David Copperfield*; went on to *Little Giant*, the Edward G. Robinson success; *Ruggles of Red Gap; Bengal Lancer*; *Top Hat; If I Had a Million; Desire;* and *The Informer*. Its future programmes include *Crime Without Passion; Design for Living;* and *Viva Villa*. The highest of high-brow cinema-goers could hardly better this list within the limitations imposed. So far the attendances have been unusually good, showing increased appreciation of good films and a growing preference for a shorter programme. The mammoth programme is all right for the family outing, for an entire evening out, but for the late workers, a show starting at 8.30 gives time for a meal and allows a comfortable evening.

Audiences in this suburb vary greatly, both in size and in behaviour. Holiday shows, especially the Christmas circuses, bring crowds of children, mothers and fathers. They enjoy almost everything and applaud the stage acts with tremendous gusto. On the other hand gangster, tough-guy and western pictures bring a larger number of men than women to the cinema. The Shirley Temple type of film brings women and youngster. Recent successes have been *Texas Rangers, Bullets or Ballots, Rhythm on the Range, San Francisco, Swing Time, My Man Godfrey, Manhattan Madness, The Great Ziegfeld*, and *Libelled Lady*.

### Speed, Action and Fast Dialogue

Differences in taste are noticeable: the audience in one of the smaller cinemas, catering mostly for working-class people, is much more responsive to speed, action, and fast dialogue than in the cinemas attended mainly by families, by women and by young girls, or middle-class people. Love stories get better response from the women of all classes. The Granada is a combination of lower middle-class and working-class audiences of the family type, and does fairly well with Shirley Temple and George Arliss for example; but an increase of men in the audience is very noticeable when a film like *Texas Rangers, Bullets or Ballots*, or *Mutiny on the Bounty* is shown. In the cinema where there is a tougher audience, much fidgeting and talking goes on during British pictures and most films of a purely love-interest type. With such audiences action pictures, good musicals, and good dialogue find an appreciative audience. The idols are Spencer Tracey, James Cagney, Edward G. Robinson, Gary Cooper, and, in comedy films, W. C. Fields and Laurel and Hardy.

The Cine-news represents a real experiment, for the news-theatre has, in the past, got its chief support in the centre of towns, where many people have an hour to spare or to occupy. In a suburb, it does not invite the same support, the only attractions being newsreels of big races, fights, and other sporting events. A certain amount of custom is received as a result of nearby cinemas being crowded. In the main, the response has not been overwhelming. Whether local news items offer a means of building support remains to be seen, but it has to be remembered that the main attractions of the Cine-news—its cartoons and its newsreels—are often showing at the main cinemas as well.

### Progressive Taste

Tooting provides much of interest and encouragement to the progressive cinemagoers or worker. Tip-top films are invariably well supported if shown under satisfactory conditions. The shifting of audiences from cinema to cinema corresponds strikingly to the merits of the film showing, save for such exceptional periods as holidays.

That there is a large and rapidly growing audience for the best type of film is strongly demonstrated by the likes and dislikes of Tooting audiences.

***This series of articles on film-taste throughout Britain will be continued.***

# GOSSIP . . .

● **BRIGHT OUTLOOK** Cinema Management, new trade monthly acclaimed by all as first rate. . . .

● **LOW WARREN** . . . (pioneer and once owner of "Kinematograph Weekly") said: It is so interesting throughout, thoroughly practical and should appeal strongly to managers. . . .

● **GAYNE DEXTER** . . . (ace publicist for Warner Brothers) says: Congratulations on first issue of Cinema Management which should serve a very definite purpose in the exploitation field. . . .

● **PANIC NOTE** . . . Capra arrived—Capra departed—Smiles then tears from all screen writers, self included. . . .

● **DO YOU REMEMBER?** . . . You're ignorant if you don't . . . remember the old days when 10 was a full house . . . read *Low Warren's* article in May Cinema Management. . . .

● **VIOLENT OUTBURST** . . . Gibson Harris raving about "Graft" in May Cinema Management and doing a good set of reviews at the same time. . . .

● **LOOK OUT FOR SPARKS** . . . *World's Press News* boxed Campbell Gifford's challenge to Film Critics in April C.M. . . . C. G. reputed to be going abroad . . . Spain? . . .

● **IMMODESTY** . . . Gossip in May Cinema. . . .

WE APOLOGISE to readers of World Film News for the foregoing, but owing to some unfortunate mistake the request for this copy was secured by our Gossip writer and discovered when it was too late to alter it—we will see to it that nothing like this occurs again. Just in case you should want a copy of Cinema Management send 8*d.* in stamps to CINEMA MANAGEMENT, 6 Tower Hill, E.C.3.

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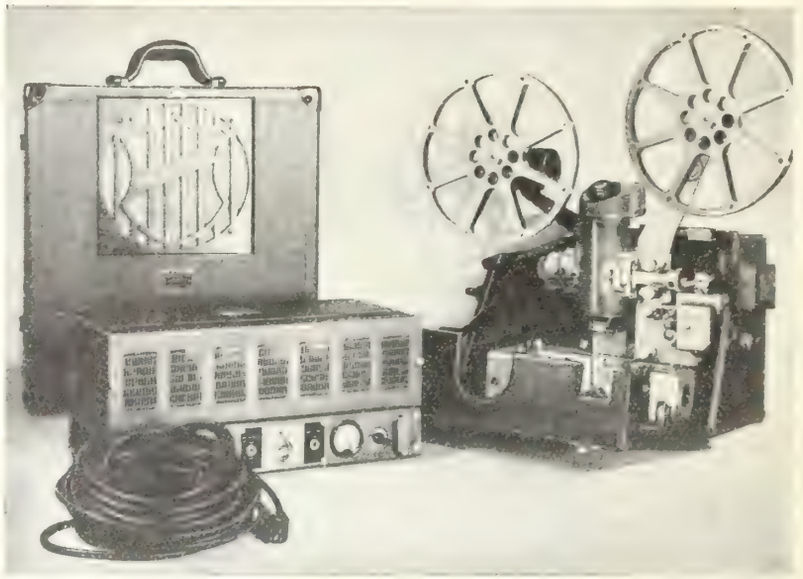

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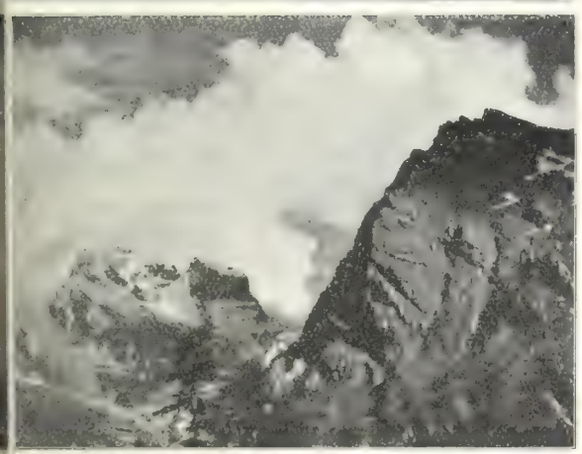
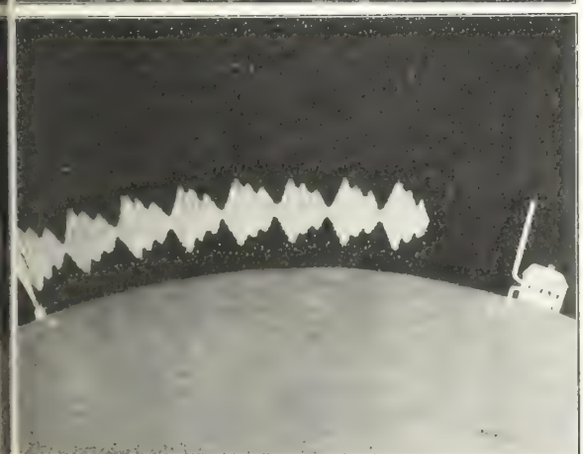




*From top to bottom of column*

**"At the Zoo—Seals and Sea Lions"**
**"The Mountain" (2 stills)**
**"The Radio"**

# A Service to Teachers

## *THE FILMS AND THE FUNCTIONS OF E.G.S.*

*(Third of a series on libraries: the first on G.B.I.'s library appeared in February, the second on the National Film Library in March.)*

EDUCATIONAL AND GENERAL SERVICES not only functions as a central distributing agency for school films and equipment made by the leading commercial firms, but also markets films made by teachers themselves. Further, being independent of the big film companies and concerned more with liaison work than with actual production, E.G.S. is free to seek educational material from out-of-the-way sources. Such material, of course, goes into its own library; *Lungfish* for example, is a Swedish film edited for use in this country; *Igloo* is made from material shot by amateurs in Lapland; a series of one-reel films in E.G.S. library has been made up from material brought back by a teacher on tour. E.G.S. employs a technical staff to arrange such material, smooth it out by careful editing, and make it suitable for use in schools.

Acting as an information bureau E.G.S. is able to supply information on choice of equipment: the question a teacher naturally asks when he is thinking of buying a projector and hiring films, is what are the options? He can get his answer for himself only by writing to all the firms in the trade, most of which he does not know, and when he gets their various replies he has to set about the task, so difficult for a beginner, of interpreting them and relating them to his own particular requirements and resources. If it is film production that interests him, the same question arises: What are the options? It is clear that a central inquiry agency is required here. E.G.S. sets out to meet this need.

### Teachers' own films

Acting as a marketing agency for films made by teachers themselves, E.G.S. distributes through its own film library experimental films made by various education authorities. A considerable part of the E.G.S. library is derived from this source. The films in this category are essentially for classroom use, and thus differ as much from commercial films as blackboard drawings differ from magazine illustrations. They are intended for classroom illustration during actual teaching, and are short, simple and silent. Some of them indeed are far from being self-explanatory—the theory underlying their production is that a film which is self-explanatory is necessarily too elaborate for a very young child to understand. Changes of viewpoint, from mid-shot to close-up, from right side to left side, make too much demand upon the young child's comprehension. Thus *Waterwheel* merely shows the stream, the dam, the sluice being opened, the lake filling up with the rush of water, the spillway, the wheel, and the process of starting up the wheel by turning the flap-valve. There are very few changes of viewpoint, and all explanation of difference of level, weight of the water, inertia of the wheel, and machinery inside the mill, must be made by the teacher himself in terms comprehensible to his class as he knows it, in words which he has found effective, and in the tone of voice and manner of pronunciation native to the district. In short, such films are meant to supply mere illustration, leaving the teacher free to use his own technique of exposition. It is partly for this reason that they are silent, and partly for the reason that it is feared that young children will be confused in trying to apprehend sound and picture simultaneously.

Such illustration films are numerous in E.G.S. catalogue, and cover such subjects as Farm Life (Pigs, Horses in Harness, Milk, Butter, etc.). Animal and Bird Life (Pigeons, Polar Bears, Lions, Camels, etc.) and simple industrial processes (Bricks, Baking, Glass, Slates, Weaving, etc.) extremely simple to an adult but very useful to a teacher engaged in building up in infant minds the concepts which adults have had so long that they forget where they got them.

### Range of library

E.G.S. library of course contains exposition films, self-explanatory, derived from various sources, in geography, topography, natural history, biology, general information, elementary physics and what used to be called "physiography" *i.e.* mountains, plains, oases, rain, the solar system, the seasons of the year, matters with which elementary school teachers are constantly dealing and which are notoriously difficult of illustration. E.G.S. of course has only a nucleus of a library of physics films, but it is an extremely important department. For, valuable as the film is, as a medium of general illustration and exposition, there is one peculiar field in which it is likely to be positively invaluable, and that is in defining spatial relations in visual terms, particularly where measurement or movement is involved. Prof. Lancelot Hogben has recently indicated a whole range of mathematical concepts which are so abstruse, when expressed in mathematical terms, as to be incomprehensible except to experts and yet so clear when expressed by cinema (in *his* way) that learners can understand them at once. He confidently predicts a great future for film in teaching advanced mathematics, the very subject on which we would have said offhand that film is bound to fail. However, one does not need to be a savant of Hogben's status to recognise that the changing seasons, for instance, or the Arctic Circle, or the planetary system, are school subjects which can really be illustrated only by cinema. Attempts to illustrate them with oranges and electric lamps invariably have a Will Hay climax.

Teachers who are film-minded watch all developments keenly. In E.G.S. film library are listed a considerably number of tendencious films. The very elementary illustration films represent the beginnings of a film service for those engaged in teaching the very young; the exposition films serve the various grades throughout the school, and in some of them elements are to be seen which suggest uses for film far beyond school requirements. The peculiarity of E.G.S. lies in the fact that it is conceived as a service to teachers, to meet their requirements in their practical work.

# REVIEW OF REVIEWS

## Edited by H. E. Blyth

### *Review of the Month*

**THE GOOD EARTH.** (Sidney Franklin—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer).
Paul Muni, Luise Rainer.

I have seen *The Good Earth* twice. I have tried to compare it—making allowances for the enthusiasms of youth, on the one hand, and the tendency of even the vividest memories to fade, on the other—with the outstanding achievements of the silent and talking screen, from *Mayerling* back to *Vaudeville* and *Ben Hur* and *The Birth of a Nation*.

Now I am ready to burn my boats. For universality of theme and profound insight into the depths of the human heart, for magnificent acting (with a qualification I shall mention presently) and technical excellence without which work in any medium is brought to nought, *The Good Earth* seems to me the greatest moving picture ever made.

There are faults, I dare say. Paul Muni sometimes over-acts a little. The army of starving, laden peasants on the march moves a shade too fast. I could wish that one actor did not say "stoo-ard" for steward and another "years" for "ears," that the younger members of the family were less briskly Californian.

This last is mere prejudice, of course. If Chinese are presumed to talk English, there is no logical reason why it should be our brand rather than America's.

In any case, such things count for nothing beside the immensity, the magnificent sincerity, of Thalberg's attempt to show the soul of four hundred million people on the screen.

Never was a picture made with less concession to the sales force. Of "romance," in the conventional sense, there is none. The heroine begins as a kitchen slave, she is married to a man she has never seen, she dresses drably and walks humbly to the end of her days.

She knows plague and famine; she sees a daughter grow up a smiling idiot, playing with pebbles and dead flowers; her husband falls in love with a dancing girl and takes away the two pearls that are all she has ever known of beauty; she is worn out by sickness and work and bearing children in odd hours between cooking and labour in the fields.

Yet *The Good Earth* remains one of the loveliest pictures ever seen. Somehow the spirit of O-Lan shines through the misery and dirt, radiating a beauty that makes the ordinary romance seem tawdry, and reduces the best of the colour films to the level of a postcard.

Pearl Buck's heroine, one of the finest creations in modern literature, is played brilliantly, unforgettably, by Luise Rainer.

Even now my mind is full of images, all moving. I see the slave of the kitchen, on her wedding day, staring miserably at the floor while her brutal companions jeer. The bride, staring incredulously at her husband, shoulders her heavy trunk, then trotting off behind him like a newly-acquired dog, grateful for being spared a kick. The mother of starving children, silently taking the big knife in hand when her husband confesses he cannot kill his trusting friend, the ox. The woman tottering to the door, when her husband would sell his land to buy food, saying "No, no—we will go south, and die walking, but we will not sell!"

O-Lan, always the stronger character, kills the new-born child for which there is no food. She is willing to sell her daughter to save her husband's land. (In the book the story goes differently.)

Yet, so beautifully is the character drawn, so harsh is the struggle for survival, you feel you have been in the presence of a saint—none the less a saint for having both feet firmly planted on the good earth.

—Campbell Dixon, *The Daily Telegraph*

The English method of taking one's victim for a ride according to Chesterton is to make the subject comfortable, prop him with cushions, tuck him in, smack him on the back and say what a good fellow he is and then with a "but" bump him off good and proper. It served the eighteenth-century satirists and still provides a model for criticism: particularly in films. For however good the intentions and fine and clever the technique, commercial motives have a habit of cheapening the effect. Criticism is right to keep the æsthetic virtues in spite of all temptation to admire.

It is worth reversing the process for *The Good Earth*. The weakness is there. With vitamins A, B and C, it lacks a little in D. This vista'd story of Chinese peasantry across a generation—of birth and death, of typhoon, drought and plague, and the handful of seed that, sprinkled into the earth, keeps the destiny of the land—deviates at times abominably. The turn of fortune for Wang the farmer, after epic battles with all the seasons and all the elements, lies not in his own thought nor in the bravery and patience and faith of the mankind he represents. It lies, if you please, in a bag of jewels which O Lan his wife snaffles in a revolution. It is no wonder that for a space Wang departs from the good earth to the exotic delights of Tilly Losch as a "bad woman."

If this by a chance symbolises the contrast between the good earth and the meretrilious delights of the town, you may wonder when you see the film why they picked on Tilly Losch. There are a thousand ways, more real than that, in which the honest farmer goes to hell and the land with him, and only a slice of the second rate in film and fiction would pick it out. The woman three fields away perhaps—and no guitar was ever necessary—the romantic and lusty lady of the big house in the manner of D. H. Lawrence—but surely not Tilly.

Once the realities are invited they command the most fervent of loyalties. When you involve yourself with farmers, elements, the struggle for life, the good earth which commands the very tap root of the sentiments, why, there is a timeless logic in this as certain as Barbara Celarent and Tilly and the jewels are not part of it.

Forget these deviations, however, for what is good in *The Good Earth*, and that is the best for many a day. It is in truth the story of a generation and of birth and death. The figures of Paul Muni and Luise Rainer come close into the life of the land and the life of the people, reflecting the labours, joys, patience, sacrifice, bravery of honest people anywhere. It is seldom anything so deep and fine appears in the cinema. Some ultimate sincerity there must have been behind the film—one's notion is that Al Lewin had something to do with it—for the technical process of joining the white figures of Muni, Rainer, Connelly, etc. with the Chinese scene is unusually successful. This contact with real people which gives truth to the film is more important even than the spectacular high spots of drought and typhoon and locusts. In fact the more these are analysed and thought over the less skilled and inspired their direction may appear. But the main line of the film is right. This can be said for very few films indeed.

—*W.F.N.*

"Three Smart Girls"

**THREE SMART GIRLS.** (Henry Koster—Universal.) Deanna Durbin, Barbara Read, Nan Gray, Charles Winninger, Binnie Barnes, Mischa Auer.

In *Three Smart Girls* a positively electrifying young girl named Deanna Durbin bursts upon a wholly unprepared world. She is not exactly beautiful. Her completely natural charm, wit and sincerity, however, is something as easy to surrender to as it is difficult to describe. There is no precocity, no artificiality and no affectation in her; she bubbles with fun, candour and sympathy, and there is a fresh sincerity which makes it impossible to talk of her methods, technique or tricks, for she apparently has none. To me she typifies all that is best in feminine youth, wilful, warm-hearted, alert and free from self-consciouness. In addition to her personality she has a singing voice of crystal, simple purity which has as little in common with crooning as vintage claret has with creosote. The story is a very human, sentimental, domestic affair of three sisters of school age who dash across the Atlantic to meet their father and prevent him marrying again. Situations are constantly piquant, never cheap, and always natural. I do not know which I enjoyed most, the picture or Miss Durbin.

—P. L. Mannock, *The Daily Herald*

It is ill work prophesying in the cinema, but I should say that if ever the films had a legitimate successor to Mary Pickford it would be this infant with the soft voice and the legs that are still coltish, too long for her. She and Nova Pilbeam are all of a piece, the strong, bright stuff of the next generation.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

Prophecy is as rash in the entertainment world as any other; but with *Three Smart Girls*, I am ready to burn my boats. It is as brilliant a comedy, in its unpretentious way, as 1937 is likely to bring us; and I will eat my hat—the only grey hat left in the Critics' Circle—if it is not one of the most sensational successes. And this despite the fact that there is not one player in the cast who really means anything at the box-office.

—Campbell Dixon, *The Daily Telegraph*

*Critical Summary.*

At last it seems that a star *has* been born—not for a long time has Hollywood staged so successful a début. The critics' praise for the simple charm of this story, and more especially of Miss Deanna Durbin, was as wholehearted as it was sincere. We are left to ponder the truism that in the cinema one must be "different" to succeed, yet to be "different" one needs only to be natural.

**ELEPHANT BOY.** (Robert Flaherty—London Films.)
Sabu.

Robert Flaherty's new film is based on Kipling's "Toomai of the Elephants" and for that reason the picture has more narrative and less documentary interest than previous work by this director. *Elephant Boy* is a film anxious to tell its story, and though at times it tells it mainly by dialogue, it does so vividly and straightforwardly. Drama is not the picture's chief achievement, and it must be admitted that one feels more might have been made of the dance of the elephants, which was so exciting in the tale. But there is enough drama to provide legitimate opportunity for splendid spectacle, and the many scenes showing elephants bathing, building, trumpeting, or merely moving gravely, have never been rivalled. Chief of the elephants is Kala Nag. It may be suspected that, left to himself, Flaherty would have made the film an expression of the noble beast's life. As it is, with much ingenuity, he succeeds in suggesting its personality and its affection for Toomai. Toomai is played with considerable charm by a young Indian boy, Sabu. *Elephant Boy* is not intended as a study of India, and as an adventure story it is more authentic than most, while as a pageant of elephants it has much of the majesty of its chief actors, the animals.

—R.H., *The Manchester Guardian*

Flaherty found in Mysore a magnificent elephant to appear as Kala Nag and a very attractive Indian Boy, Sabu, intelligent and natural, to take the part of Toomai. The early scenes between the elephant and the boy are delightfully fresh and natural, and are photographed with Flaherty's usual fine command of open-air detail. But—just as in *Man of Aran*—Flaherty was required to fill out his story with incidental excitements in a much more artificial key. If Flaherty had been left alone to work throughout in his own style he might have produced a masterpiece, for the best of the jungle scenes open up a world never shown so vividly before on the screen. Kala Nag is an animal star of the first order, and a baby elephant, appearing with his mother in the river sequence, is sure to be a favourite. His quaintly appealing antics, as he splashes about around his mother's feet, might have come out of a Walt Disney cartoon. —*The Yorkshire Post*

**"Wings of the Morning"**

It takes Flaherty to remind us that we film people live in two worlds, and the two, Kipling fashion, do not often meet. The studio mind does not understand the realist mind, nor vice versa. One hopes continually a producer will arise who will take a genius for great observation like Flaherty's and combine it naturally with the forces of the studio. Korda has not succeeded in being that producer. —*W.F.N.* (March)

**WINGS OF THE MORNING.** (Harold Schuster—20th Century-Fox.)
Annabella, Leslie Banks, Henry Fonda, Stewart Rome, John McCormack, Steve Donoghue.

We must concede that England's first technicolour venture is the best, chromatically, we have seen. *Wings of the Morning* is a visual delight, a wholesome, refreshing and altogether likeable little romance. It is pleasant, now and then, to be reminded of the simpler things of life. *Wings of the Morning* is quaintly old-fashioned, even to its prologue about the gypsy maid who married the lord of the manor, was driven away after he died and harkened to the old crone's prophesy that naught but evil would follow their union until the fourth generation. With Annabella, a charming little French actress as much the gamine as Bergner and vastly more attractive, as the fourth generation, returning, disguised as a youth, to Lord Clontarf's gypsy preserve in Erin seeking sanctuary from the Spanish revolution, the picture takes a deep and invigorating breath and plunges into a pleasantly unimportant romance. So guileless a bid for our favour really could not be received gracelessly, particularly when it includes such a delightful leading lady and such splendid colour photography. The scenes filmed outdoors—at the picturesque Downs on Derby Day, of Killarney's lakes and fells—are completely attractive. Even skin textures have been naturally photographed for the first time.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

*Wings of the Morning* is a British colour film which uses gypsies in Spain for several reels, as an excuse for colour, but achieves startling colour effects only when it gets back to grey old London. A flash of a bus going down a street, a glimpse of a neon sign. Demonstrates the contention that colour will succeed as soon as it is applied to everyday scenes, as soon as the film-makers stop going out looking for colour.

—Meyer Levin, *Esquire*

*Critical Summary.* Since no two critics have ever been able to agree on what constitutes natural colour on the screen, we may safely prophesy the usual storm of controversy over, but nevertheless a welcome success for this, the first British colour film.

**PAGLIACCI.** (Karl Grüne—Trafalgar.)
Richard Tauber, Steffi Duna, Arthur Margetson, Jerry Verno, Diana Napier.

*Pagliacci* is not worthy of the world-famous opera, which had one of the best stories ever chosen for that kind of music. It had romance and drama and high-speed action. As the owners of the copyright would not allow any humour to be used in the film version, Jerry Verno was engaged as a comic, and then not allowed to be funny. The photography is of the kind to which I am so used now in British pictures. When, at the beginning, Richard Tauber sings "On with the motley," he does so to the accompaniment of coloured scenes which do not belong to each other. Some show a clown distraught because someone else had danced off with his girl. Then you see a bit of a setting sun that might be a Christmas card. I think it is a great pity that Tauber has not yet found on the films his proper vehicle. He is supreme in his own kind of song.

—Hannen Swaffer, *The People*

## "Pagliacci" (cont.)

I will just say that Richard Tauber, singing as Canio, seemed to me to acquit himself with more distinction than Richard Tauber failing to keep the affections of a wife incomprehensibly ready to accept the love of others. There are passages in Leon-Cavallo's music, known to all, in which the great singer is superb, but the proper place for them is the stage. The result might have been better if the film of "Pagliacci" had been produced with more thought. Even in this medium a little persuaviness is an advantage, and I should have been more impressed had there not been, in the Alps, so much disregard for clothing, and if one of the gayest numbers had not been sung in a charabanc which, in order to remain in the picture, constantly moves backwards as well as forwards, which, elsewhere, charabancs do not do. —E. V. L., *Punch*

*Critical Summary.*

"If this picture is entertainment as the public understands it," wrote Paul Dehn "I'll eat the whole of Leoncavallo's score and like it." In other words yet another film has fallen between the two stools of Art and Entertainment. Since the success of *One Night of Love* only Mamoulian, with *The Gay Desparado*, has successfully combined the two.

**THUNDER IN THE CITY.** (Marion Gering—Atlantic.)
Edward G. Robinson, Nigel Bruce, Luli Deste, Ralph Richardson.

*Thunder in the City* presents the bright situation of an American go-getter who tries to take London in his stride with ballyhoo methods. The methods are only partially successful, but Edward G. Robinson's portrait of a man with a large bee in a small bonnet is very good indeed. Losing his job in America, he reaches England penniless, but forms a giant company to commercialise a new type of metal. The joke is a good one, but like so many jokes, it nearly loses its point by being over-emphasised. The picture, like the joke, is excellent after-dinner entertainment, helped considerably by Nigel Bruce, whose benign smile hovers with aristocratic condescension over the story.

—Connery Chappell, *The Sunday Dispatch*

*Thunder in the City* and *Head Over Heels* compete for the position of worst English film of the quarter. I think the former has it, with its tricky self-conscious continuity, its horde of Hollywood stars on holiday, Mr. Ned Mann's worst "special effect" to date, and its complete ignorance—in spite of its national studio—of English life and behaviour. It is a fantasy, a fantasy by an elephantine disciple of M. Clair (astonishingly his name is Robert E. Sherwood) but even a fantasy needs some relation to life. Perhaps the only real English thing about the picture is its humour: an awful vista of old bound *Punch's* dwindling down the dark shelves of a country house library.

—Graham Greene, *The Spectator*

*Critical Summary.*

This picture was, on the whole, very well received by the critics and Graham Greene was in the minority in the opinion expressed. Satire at the expense of one's countrymen is looked upon with some doubt by the trade (probably justifiably), but the necessary tact has been used in this case. Film directors are still mindful of what happened to Clair after *The Italian Straw Hat*.

"Pennies from Heaven"

**DARK JOURNEY.** (Victor Saville—London Films.)
Vivien Leigh, Conrad Veidt, Anthony Bushell, Joan Gardner.

It is unfortunate that Victor Saville's first Denham production has such a mediocre and scrappily told story. It is a tale of war-time espionage. In making it complicated, the writers have only confused the theme; a mistake emphasised by the inexpert editing of the picture. Technical points are also bad and the production, therefore, is weak, and unworthy of the two stars, Conrad Veidt and Vivien Leigh. Veidt, at once suave and sinister, makes a perfect German officer and spy. Miss Leigh, who has remarkable photographic qualities, shows Korda is right in deciding to make her a star. But her part is weakly conceived. *Dark Journey* has no real drama or excitement.—Richard Haestier, *The Star*

*Dark Journey's* greatest virtue consists in the fact that, despite one's never realising the true nationality or purpose of any single character, one still claps and hisses—quite indiscriminately and with huge enjoyment. Its pace and atmosphere are such that they excite us intensely, without our having the mistiest notion why. Had Director Victor Saville tightened up the tale's loose ends, removed ambiguity and made clear what was problematical, *Dark Journey* might have been the greatest spy-picture of all time. It has everything else to recommend it; an air of sustained vigour, nerve-racking intrigue, impending doom and incessant suspense. *Dark Journey* should certainly be visited, but in a spirit of mild charity, which says: "May the better side win!"—even if you have no notion which *is* the better side . . . or, indeed, which side is which.

—Paul Dehn, *The Sunday Referee*

*Critical Summary.*

Generally well received, although nearly all the critics complained of the obscurity of the plot. Similarly nearly all remarked on the great screen promise shown by Miss Vivien Leigh.

**PENNIES FROM HEAVEN.** (Norman McLeod—Columbia.)
Bing Crosby, Madge Evans, Edith Fellows, Louis Armstrong.

Drenched with artless sentiment, the story presents Bing Crosby, out from prison and crooning the countryside with a lute. It is all on low gear, soothing and sedative (except for Mr. Armstrong), and well within the mental grasp of ten-year-olds. The Crosby voice pleases me. In fact, I no longer call him a crooner. A formidable list of the experts responsible appears as usual at the start of the picture. The general effect on me, however, was that of a very small leak in a very large treacle barrel.

—P. L. Mannock, *The Daily Herald*

It is the fashion to decry crooners. I don't know why. They make pleasant noises without showing their tonsils or cracking one's eardrums. And when they turn their noses skyward and twang a guitar they are in the honoured tradition of the troubadours. Crosby claims to be the last of the troubadours in this film. *Pennies from Heaven* is a pleasant romance which might have been speeded up. Crosby has a good sense of humour; it is a pity he did not have more opportunities to use it.

—Ian Coster, *The Evening Standard*

## W.F.N. SELECTION

| | |
|---|---|
| *The Good Earth* | * * * |
| *Three Smart Girls* | * * |
| *Elephant Boy* | * * |
| *Wings of the Morning* | * |
| *For Valour* | * |

## OTHER FILMS COVERED

*Pagliacci*

*Thunder in the City*

*Dark Journey*

*Pennies from Heaven*

*Swing High, Swing Low*

*Les Loups entre Nous*

*The Golem*

**FOR VALOUR.** (Tom Walls—Capitol)
Tom Walls, Ralph Lynn, Veronica Rose, Joan Marion.

*For Valour* is a very pleasant antidote to the Coronation, though it is a little marred by an inability to remain wholly flippant. Mr. Tom Walls as an old convict and also as his son, a crooked financier: Mr. Ralph Lynn as an ancient Boer War veteran and also as his thieving and incompetent grandson, play most of the parts themselves. The burlesque on war-time patriotism—recruiting meetings in the Victorian and in the Georgian manner with the appropriate songs strummed out in church halls under the painted stare of Roberts and Kitchener—may prove puzzling to audiences properly conditioned by the patriotic Press, and our more earnest visitors from the Dominions may be a trifle put out by the elaborate and almost universal roguery (even the Boer War veteran becomes a kleptomaniac at the close). But those of us who are tired of the sturdy, sober and imperial virtues of the new reign will welcome this return to the tradition of *The English Rogue* and *Moll Flanders*. It is not, of course, quite as good as all that; Mr. Tom Walls is better as an actor than he is as a director, and the shadow of schoolmaster *Punch*—"so much cause for mirth and so little for harm"—has to be placated with an honest character and a few good resolutions.

—Graham Greene, *The Spectator*

**SWING HIGH, SWING LOW.** (Mitchell Leisen—Paramount.)
Carole Lombard, Fred MacMurray, Charles Butterworth, Dorothy Lamour.

A brilliant actress who has had to fight her way to fame is Carole Lombard, who is nearly everything that is commendable in *Swing High, Swing Low*. It is Carole Lombard who makes the film attractive and sometimes credible. An American Marine, running true to film form, crashes acquaintance with a pretty girl on the day he is discharged from the service. The Marine is no good, but the girl falls in love with him instantaneously, marries him, and makes him a star trumpeter in a dance band. Success goes, inevitably, to his giddy head. He has a silly quarrel with his loyal little wife and goes straight to the dogs, but he cannot forget. The story is stock stuff and hard to believe, but for most of the time these things are unimportant, since you will have all the pleasure you want in watching Carole Lombard giving a superbly sensitive performance. She brightens the comedy. She lightens the romance. She is grand.

—Seton Margrave, *The Daily Mail*

**LES LOUPS ENTRE NOUS.**—Sequel to *2nd Bureau*. (Léon Mathot—French.)
Renée St. Cyr, Jules Berry, Pierre Renoir, Pierre Magnier, Roger Duchesne.

It is, of course, becoming increasingly difficult to believe in spies, to accept their extraordinary capacities without a murmur, and to watch them stripping off their false moustaches without a smile. And it would have been pleasant if French lucidity and intelligence had been used in the service of doubt; a pleasant film could have been made about the muddle and minutiae of international espionage. But even in the old stories of spies who can gull everybody, the French can still show their dexterity. In this sequel to another film of spies, the story is scarcely plausible; but the details and the characters are often delightful, and the conversation of the spies is very different from that of the muffled and inarticulate heroes to whom we are accustomed.

—*The Times*

Like so many manifestations of French culture the films from across the Channel are refreshingly light-hearted. The sequel to *Second Bureau* is remarkable for this. Here is a spy story every bit as thrilling as its forerunner. Perhaps in places too much is left to the imagination and elsewhere too much is expected of it. It is impossible to believe that French officers can so quickly place themselves in the nerve-centre of the German military and political machine. Characters are introduced without apparent reason and the death rate from suicide and violence is unnecessarily high. Yet the film manages to be gripping and builds up a more realistic atmosphere than most thrillers. It has an effective background. The Germans are portrayed harshly but wittily, and perhaps such cinematic sarcasm is not a contribution to world peace. —*The Birmingham Mail*

**THE GOLEM.** (Julien Duvivier—French.)
Harry Baur, Jan Holt, Karl Roger, Charles Dorat.

It is a strange and unhappy paradox that prevents the film of *The Golem*, that curious medieval legend of the Prague ghetto, from being made again to-day in the country that first produced it, with so much power and enchantment, as a silent picture thirteen years ago.

If ever there was a subject fitted at heart to the German talent, it is *The Golem*. Strange mixture of dogma and magic, of beauty and the black arts, of cruelty and sentiment, it is the story of a robot, compound of earth, air, fire, and water, who can be brought to life at need to save the Jewish people. What a picture Paul Wegener made of this legend in the golden days of the German cinema!

There is little enchantment about the present version of *The Golem*, but in its precise and handsome French way it is impressive. Harry Baur, as the fear-ridden emperor, is dry, academic, brilliant. The intrigues and gallantries of the court, the habits of hall and stable and bedchamber, are done with relish. There is a lovely face in it, too: a young actress named Jan Holt, who gives the film occasional gleams of poetry. It is all rich and spacious, and rather exquisite, and the big scene at the end should do nicely, if one can forget that Wegener once did it so much better, with nothing but a robot, a child and a flower. —C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

**"The Golem"**

# WORLD OPINION

*THE PROGRESS OF ENGLISH CRITICISM*

"Weak-knee'd, wandering, effeminate, unwholesome, immoral."

*Punch* on Ibsen, 1893.

"Grotesque, detestable, whining, snivelling, cadging."

*St. John Ervine* on D. H. Lawrence, 1937.

## Anti-Garbo

IT IS WORTH ANY critic's life to express heresy regarding the thespianic divinity of the divine Garbo. On several occasions I have expressed the personal impression that there is a wide swath of ham in the glorious Greta, and have I caught it! Letters pour in, telling me what a low life I am. Threats, insults, and curses.

Unafraid, I still maintain that there is a great deal of fourflush in both Garbo's screen and offscreen conduct. It persists in *Camille*, and helps make that old classic a monotonous and fatiguing affair until the final twenty minutes. When Greta starts to die, she is so circumscribed in her histrionics that she gives a new impression of her acting powers. She's too ill to twist her face, play tunes on her voice, or gyrate her body. She dies beautifully, and I came close, at this juncture, to joining the Garbo fan club. It is still a little difficult to remember my duty and give her the works for her earlier excesses in this picture.

Detach yourself from the Garbo spell at any point in almost any Garbo picture, slap yourself back to common sense, listen to her as you might to any woman, and you'll realize what horsefeathers most of the Garbo technique is. There is too much glum severity or knowing laughter (with head thrown back). It is all too thick, all too, too significant. I say it's spinach.

I object fundamentally to the Garbo type of film, in the first place. Love is invariably magnified to pathological importance. I have previously said that Garbo is sex on a high horse. I dislike the possible effects on the rising generation of the philosophy of love in the usual Garbo film. I prefer even the more wholesome, more profane Mae West philosophy, which is: if it works, fine!—if not, "Beulah, peel me a grape!"

You all know *Camille*, the girl with the cough. This show is just a skirt-rustly costume chromo which Hollywood must haul out every few years. This version is notable for three things: the really fine death scenes by Miss Garbo, the hilarious and ribald monkey shines of Laura Hope Crews, and a performance by Robert Taylor in which he holds himself down and, for once, doesn't make a complete ass of himself.

Don Herold, *The Commentator*

## Our Children

AT MANY CONFERENCES the problem of leisure has been discussed, and, as usual, discussion took the form of asking how it was possible to keep boys and girls out of the cinema. The cinema, with football matches, and even, it seems, newspapers, are favourite objects of attack for schoolmasters, who call them contemptuously the results of mass production. It seems to be agreed that the best protection against such corrupt influences is the development of "hobbies," nature-study, woodwork, bookbinding, photography; it is hoped that an interest in these pursuits will keep children out of danger. The hope is futile; children like adults will not keep out of the cinema for the sake of bookbinding. It would be wise to recognise this; to accept the fact that mass production is the rule of the world in which children have to live; to realise that it is not necessarily a contemptible thing and has indeed brought inestimable benefits to the world. It has indeed brought vices also; and the problem of education is to fit boys and girls for a machine age by teaching them to distinguish between what is good and bad in its products, and that cannot be done by rejecting contemptuously some of its most distinctive achievements.

For with instinctive common sense, children, like adults, know the sort of world they have to live in, and accept it for better or worse; they know that bookbinding is no escape from it. But, leaving school, they find that they have little preparation for it. They go, most of them, once or twice a week to the cinema but no one has tried to teach them what is good or bad in it. They become, most of them, wage-earners in a highly developed and complicated industrial system, but no one has told them how it works. They all of them have bodies which only with increasing difficulty can be kept healthy, but no one has taught them the simple facts of biology. So far as many schools are concerned, they would not even know how they are born, live and die. They have to learn for themselves about the most important facts of their lives, the frivolous as well as the serious. With each other they discuss whether Edward G. Robinson or James Cagney makes the best gangster, and this is a form of criticism more living than their lessons in "literature." They discuss also, more rarely, the choice between different kinds of jobs: in the wrong way and from the wrong sources they learn the facts of biology. But these subjects are, for the most part, considered too high or too low for our educational system, though fortunately some books are attempting to teach them.

Such criticisms as these have made many people doubt altogether the value of popular education, indeed to attribute to it the troubles of the world to-day. It is a false conclusion; for it is not education but the lack of a proper education which is to blame. And if we suspect that we have failed with our own children, it is alarming to realise that we also have the children of native peoples to care for.

—*The Spectator*

## But no system is perfect

IN THE LARGER MATTERS, such as the banning of films dealing with the Edward VIII-Mrs. Simpson affair, the (Will Hays) office is actuated solely by the question of propriety and good taste, Mr. Hays says: politics and commercialism do not enter. The movies are now beyond that peep-show stage when they could be stampeded by every passing fad; they are too dignified to take opportunistic advantage of every cause célèbre that comes along, he says. Mr. Hays also categorically denies ever having pulled the "social teeth" out of any film script. He admits, on the other hand, that censorship runs in seasonal cycles: the office is now cracking down on unnecessary drinking scenes, for example, and the authors, as usual, are complaining because it robs them of easy "business," thus forcing them to think. One of the most revolutionary provisions of the code is the flat statement: "Revenge in modern times shall not be justified." As regards the advertising code, students of the lobby variety, which breeds so many gorgeous monstrosities of overstatement, may be interested in Sections 2 and 3, which provide that "good taste shall be the guiding rule of motion picture advertising" and "illustrations and text in advertising shall faithfully represent the pictures themselves." But no system is perfect.

—B. R. Crisler, *New York Times*

## Literature—Character

ANOTHER CULTURAL BY-PRODUCT of motion pictures is the use that is being made of them in photoplay appreciation classes in junior and senior high schools throughout the country. It is estimated that nearly 5,000,000 pupils are now enrolled in classes and informal study groups that analyse feature motion pictures under faculty guidance with the aim of stimulating greater interest in the study of literature, history, geography and science. Educators are agreed that, with the prospect of seeing a screen adaption of a classic, pupils read the book with keener interest.

While schools have made rapid strides in adapting motion pictures to cultural uses, an experiment has been quietly going on for several years in the field of character education under the guidance of the Committee on Social Values in Motion Pictures. Dr. Howard M. Le-Sourd, dean of the Boston University Graduate School, is chairman of the committee, which includes Dr. Florence Hale, former president of the National Education Association; Dr. Mark A. May, director of the Institute of Human Relations, Yale University; Dr. Frank N. Freeman, Professor of Psychology, University of Chicago; and Dr. Miriam Van Waters, phrenologist and a member of Harvard Crime Survey.

—*N.Y. Sunday Times*

## A Generation Ago

REMARKABLE FILM.—On Monday evening at Mr. A. R. P. Hickley's Picture Playhouse in New Writtle Street, Chelmsford, a splendid film was shown, 300 feet in length, of Sunday's Church parade from start to finish. With perfect conditions as to weather and light, the result is an eminent success, and the film is shown with a distinctness and steadiness which makes the delighted spectator feel that he is on the ground with the troops and taking part in the service. It is a large picture, too, and in it all the officers and men, the National Reserve, the Boy Scouts, and the general congregation are easily recognised. So real, indeed, is the reproduction, that one almost expects to hear the voice of the chaplain as he is seen preaching his sermon.

From the *Essex Chronicle*, 1912

# WORLD OPINION

## *Parliamentary Debate on Film and Cruelty to Animals*

### Sir Robert Gower

THE MEASURE HAS BEEN promoted and introduced by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, with the support of the National Canine Defence League, and other humanitarian societies of the country.

The reason why it has been introduced, and why I am moving the Second Reading to-day, is because we are advised by eminent counsel that it is necessary for a Bill of this nature to be passed to give effect to its principles. The object of the Bill is to

"*Prohibit the production or exhibition of films depicting suffering to animals or in the production of which suffering may have been caused to animals; and for purposes connected therewith.*"

I would particularly refer to Clause 1, which provides that:

"*No person shall produce or make, or cause or knowingly permit to be produced or made, or take part in the producing or making of—*

*any film, the producing or making of which involves suffering to animals; or*

*any film depicting or purporting to depict combats with or between animals, or the suffering, terror or rage of animals,*

*and no person*"—

and this is important—

"*shall exhibit, or cause or knowingly permit to be exhibited, any such film, whether made in the United Kingdom or elsewhere.*"

The Bill makes illegal the exhibition of certain films which for some time past have been exhibited in this country. The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals naturally keep a very vigilant eye on all films in which animals are introduced, and I would refer the House to a film which was exhibited only last year. The incidents feature animals fighting as follow:

"*Small monkey, large snake close by. Monkey appears terrified. Before snake strikes, hand takes monkey away.*

"*Hunters after gorilla. It is shot and killed and carcase held up. Wild dog shot at, carcase also seen. Leopard stalking hyena, fight ensues*"—

A terrible fight I am told—

"*cries of the animals heard. Rhinoceros shot and killed. Animal seen kicking its last. Lion seen to attack hyena, and is seen devouring carcase. Lions after herd of zebras. Next seen tearing at carcase of one. Lion caught in covered pit trap, falling into net. Lion struggles and roars with rage. Number of crocodiles seen, shot at by hunters, one or two killed, seen struggling in water just before death. Fight between two snakes screened, victor swallowing vanquished. Slow process and objectionable to watch.*"

That is the type of film which we desire not to see on the screens of this country . . . .

Several of my hon. Friends have raised points in regard to some of the implications of the Bill, and I should like to deal with those points briefly. My hon. Friend the Member for St. Albans (Sir F. Fremantle)—whose accident yesterday we all deplore, and we sincerely sympathise with him—has pointed out that if the Bill is passed in its present form it will, for example, prevent the exhibition of films showing experiments upon animals to students in our medical schools, and the result would be that more animals would have to be experimented upon, because actual experimentation before the students would have to take the place of the films. We do not desire that such should happen and, therefore, on behalf of the promoters of the Bill I have agreed with my hon. Friend that if the Bill obtains a Second Reading that point will be dealt with in Committee. We shall have no difficulty in agreeing an appropriate Amendment.

A point has also been raised by other of my hon. Friends that the Bill might make it illegal to exhibit films of accidents which occur, for example, at race meetings such as the Grand National. I would point out that by Clause 1 (3) it is provided that:

"*Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting the making or exhibition of a film of an event or scene, not being an event or scene organised or arranged for the purpose, by reason only that it depicts as an incident of that event or scene the occurrence of an accident involving an animal.*"

### Lt.-Col. Moore

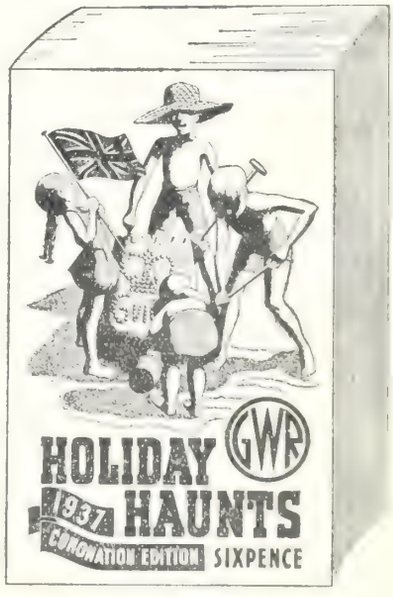
WE ARE BECOMING increasingly cinema-conscious. The cinema is probably the most popular entertainment at the present time and has, therefore, the most vital and powerful effect on public opinion. The cinema has made our girls, working and non-working girls, beauty-conscious and clothes-conscious—and a very good thing, too. The cinema has exposed the crime rackets and we in this country have made up our minds that we will never allow the crime rackets of America to penetrate here. They have shown us its dangers, and warned us against any such thing. The cinema has introduced us to new countries and old customs. It has shown us beauties of scenery which no education or travel has been able to show. Hence the popularity of cruises. Therefore in judging this Bill we must take into consideration these three factors. The Bill seeks to carry out two or three definite achievements. It wants to ensure that in the production of films of animal life only the natural activities of animals shall be represented, not the artificial activities and passions which may be provoked. We do not want to see emotions and passions of animals provoked in order to force them into unnatural and unwanted contests. The Bill also seeks to satisfy the humane demand that no unnatural or sadist tendencies on the part of people shall be gratified by deliberately showing them films which make cruelty an essential feature. We want films which will develop and educate and guide the humane instincts of mankind. We want to develop a public conscience against any tendency to cruelty. Those are the desires we seek to achieve.

### Mr. Graham Kerr

I SHOULD LIKE TO speak on this subject first as a professional biologist—because this is really a biological question—and, secondly, as a lover of animals. I wish to do everything possible to diminish cruelty and suffering. At the same time, I confess that I do not regard penal legislation as the proper way to achieve that end. Education is what is wanted, and if the children of the country were educated properly they would grow up with an abhorrence of cruelty. The fact that we have to have great societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals and cruelty to children is, to my mind, one of the most dreadful blots upon our so-called civilisation. In spite of my sentimental feelings, I cannot support this Bill. The use of the cinema has become a great factor in biological teaching and investigation. My own department in Glasgow was one of the first biological institutes in the world in which a full-sized moving picture apparatus was installed as part of its equipment. That apparatus is extensively used. Its uses in teaching are various. In the first place, it gives access to the study of living creatures which would not otherwise be accessible, such as creatures which live in the deep sea or in the tropics or in some "un-getatable" part of the world. Only yesterday I saw Captain Knight's marvellously interesting and instructive film of living creatures in Africa. That film enabled one to see living creatures in their natural state which one otherwise would not be able to see.

*Excerpts reprinted from the House of Commons Official Report, April 9th, 1937, from the section dealing with Cinematograph Films (Animals) Bill. By permission of the Controller, H.M. Stationery Office.*


The Holiday Book
OF
The Holiday Line

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# COCKA

## By Rodney

### SAYINGS

"Go without hats, girls, if you would have lovely, shining locks, and fewer dull, drab ringlets."—*Gracie Allen.*

"I wish I had a son."—*Eddie Cantor.*

"I do wish people would learn how to pronounce my name correctly."—*Simone Simon.*

### *Is there a Plastic Surgeon in the House?*

It seems that the old *maestro* Cecil B. De Mille has gotten away from bathtubs awhile, and has been toying with the idea of a perfect composite man.

"My idea for a perfect composite man," sez he, "would be a male with Joel McCrea's head; Ronald Colman's eyes; John Barrymore's nose; Leslie Howard's mouth; Charlie Chaplin's hands; Arthur Hohl's voice; Larry Crabbe's physique; and Gary Cooper's personality."

Which still leaves Jimmy Durante's nose roaming around free lance. Nice work, Cecil, but picture the consequences of such an amalgam. Can't you imagine Barrymore's nose twitching when Leslie Howard's mouth started going whimsical on him? What are you going to do about that, hey? Why not put Dick Powell's moustache in between just to make our day perfect?

And Charlie Chaplin's hands? How d'you think Gary Cooper's personality is going to like having them twitching at his pants all the time.

You didn't say anything about pants, but a perfect man's got to have pants.

And take Ronald Colman's eyes. What's going to happen when they want to turn around and follow a girl that never entered Joel McCrea's head? Answer that. And d'you imagine Larry Crabbe's physique is going to be seen at smart restaurants in company with Arthur Hohl's voice. Think how people would *talk!*

Nevertheless, you're all right, Cecil; you've given us an idea. Anyone who gives us an idea is all right. We've been busy with pen and paper ourselves, mulling over the idea of a Perfect Composite Woman (we're only human). Here's the layout:

Shirley Temple's hair, combed out a bit; Ben Turpin's eyes; Mrs. Van der Elst's neck; a torso we saw in the British Museum; Kay Francis's back; legs by Dietrich; Queen Anne's terrace; Amy Johnson's feet; the whole thing wrapped up, neat as you please, in that rather daring number C. A. Lejeune wears to the Press Shows.

We'll leave out the voice. Whaddya say, fellows?

**Cries of Old London**

"Who'll buy my nice, airy Studios?"

### Column for Executive-lovers

Jeffrey Bernerd
Is not very lernerd.

At Victor Saville
No one can caville.

Adolf Zukor
Is not a very good-lukor.

Darryl Zanuck
Looks a bit satanuck.

Michael Balcon
Is always talcon.

Arthur Dent
Never uses scent.

Brian Desmond Hurst
Is about to burst.

Julius Hagen
Has saved his bagen.

I often fear for Hitch's
Britches.

Ben Goetz
Wears comic shoetz.

Alexander Korda
Spends money like worda.

There aren't any rhymes
For the other nymes.

### SOCIAL STUFF

Miss Deirdre Screaming, whose exhibition of horses' nose-bags knitted entirely with the feet caused a riot at the Glauber Galleries last week, fell into the orchestra at a London theatre last night. She is believed to have fractured a tuba.

* * *

Captain "Messy" Foulmouth will be taking his string to Epsom in the Spring. It's the same old string with the bent pin at one end.

* * *

Miss Lili Libido, a well-known figure at, and under, the tables at Monte Carlo, will devote the season to social work. "Slumming is *so* slimming," she told our Boudoir Correspondent in that shrill, irritating voice of hers.

* * *

Lady Amnesia Gaggling will be racing her steam-dredger, "Black Beauty," at Cowes.

* * *

Lord Maudlin was severely thrown yesterday when attempting to ride a yak through the Burlington Arcade, for a bet.

### *Screen-Writers Salaries: the truth*

I have been asked to clear up, once and for all, the mystery surrounding the subject of the sums earned by screen-writers for their work.

Here are some facts gathered in the course of conversation with some of the screen's most notable authors (I don't mind who I'm seen talking to).

HUGH WALPOLE: "They paid me in coloured beads for *David Copperfield.* The natives seem quite friendly."

TEDDY BROWN, whose life-story, *Elephant Boy*, has just been filmed, said: "*Elephant Boy* brought me in ten annas—all nice girls."

P. G. WODEHOUSE, who is scripting Gibbons' *Decline and Fall* for Janet Gaynor: "Why is 90 per cent. of commercial travellers' conversation about sex?"

H. G. WELLS, whose Channel-crossing drama, *Things to Come Back*, won him Doggett's Coat and Badge (with an extra pair of trousers) in 1935, said: "Boy! Am I in the heavy dough!"

CLIFFORD ODETS: "It's not the money so much as having somewhere to sit."

JAMES HILTON: "All I can say is that I make enough to buy the lovely undies an author never feels happy without. Is 'without' a preposition?"

Writers are naturally reticent about their earnings, but there is little doubt that their stipends are, in most cases, sufficient to meet their simple needs.

It is an open secret, for instance, that the majority of them now own their own bicycles and in the lunch-hour many famous literary figures may be seen cycling happily around the lot, practising their tricks. And they are never happier than when Hughie ("Madcap") Walpole gets one foot caught in the wheel and falls flat on his face.

These high salaries, however, have one inevitable reaction. It often happens that a furtive figure sidles up to the President's desk and hands back his pay-envelope with the words "Conscience Money" scribbled across it.

On these occasions, the President simply looks up at the writer with the eyes of a stricken deer and says: "Come now, Arthur. Would Shakespeare have done that?"

"Shakespeare?" queries the writer, his eyes suspiciously bright.

"Sure, Shakespeare," comes back the Pres. "The boy who gave us *Romulus and Juniper* and *Has You Liked It?*"

"No, he probably wouldn't," says the author, and there's little left for him to do then but take back the money. But then, there's little left for him to do at any time.

**Interval for Remorse**

I wish I loved the moving pic.
I wish it didn't make me sick.
For, being sick, I stay away—
I'll miss a darn good film some day.

# LORUM

## Hobson

### Gum and get it

An American contemporary, adept at the *mot juste*, has described chewing-gum as "that nemesis of the theatreman," citing the difficulties experienced by the manager of a cinema in Miami in removing the clinging sweetmeat from the rough homespuns of the patrons.

We are reminded of the sad case of a Mr. George Rubble, who spent three weeks securely gummed to a ninepenny seat in the Electric Palace at Much Wheedling, Bucks. Rather than take the easy way out and leave his corduroys behind, Rubble chose to stick to his post, where he soon became a familiar figure to patrons of the theatre, who would bring him gifts of home-cooked dainties and news of the great world outside.

The Theatre was eventually wrecked during the annual Much Wheedling battle of flowers, and Rubble was able to leave with the uprooted seat affixed to his body.

He is still to be seen in the village wearing his strange appendage, causing a certain amount of confusion in buses and a great deal of raucous laughter everywhere. He is known locally as "The Man in the Iron Bustle."

Though our readers may not suspect it, the subject of conversation among the anxious little groups to be seen these days in Wardour Street is not the Future of the Industry, but how the hell to get the customers out of the theatre without taking half the fauteuils with them.

### Lowing Herd Dept.

At the annual meeting of the Cheshire Dairy Farmers' Association, it was stated that in the old days farmers' sons and daughters used to take advantage of the Dairy Show to have a day out, often becoming engaged as a result. To-day, it was alleged, they went to the cinemas instead, and, as the Chairman very aptly remarked, they probably got engaged in the cinemas as well.

Personally, we consider this a retrograde step on the part of the farmers' sons and daughters. Apart from the habit of getting engaged, which can be indulged practically anywhere, they are much better off at a Dairy Show. When it comes to facial expressions, a Hollywood blonde has nothing on a shorthorn with a good, healthy cud nicely in circulation; and should champions of the cinemas bring the charge that all cows look very much alike, cannot that accusation be levelled with equal accuracy at the film fraternity?

We think so. Your true cow-connoisseur, your dyed-in-the-wool Guernsey-lover will find more individuality, more fine points to appraise in a gaggle of these animals than in the cast of any current Hollywood production.

And if you attempt to put forward the absurd suggestion that one does at least keep one's shoes clean in a cinema, we would say, what would farmers' sons and daughters be doing in shoes, anyhow? Getting soft, eh? Decadent?

Pardon us feeling this way about it. We're old cowhands, you see.

**MASTERPIECES OF TACT NO. 1.**

In a little book called *Cinema Survey* there is an essay by Panjandrum Dallas Bower of the B.B.C. (Television to you). Dallas uncorks a few vintage cracks about films which indicate to the Wardour Street boys just what the Alexandra Palace maestros think of them. For instance:—

*Films*
"All-crooning, all stammering horror."
"Lachrymal eyewash."
"Mental dope, very often of a singular perniciousness."
"Celluloid drivel."

*Critics*
"Our street-corner boy newspaper critics."

*Theatres*
"Vast architectural monsters of neon and bad design."

*Audience*
"Bowler-hatted half-wit."

*And Yourselves, Boys*
"The things of Wardour Street."

("It's a good job we shall never have to use films for Television," as the Public Relations Dept. officer might say to the Director General).

**Overheard at the Trade Show**

"It's plagiarism, that's what it is!"

"Not only plagiarism, Ernie. It's copied from another picture."

### *They're Funny that way*

It has been put forward, in extenuation, that Bing Crosby's honeyed tones are due in no small measure to a loose muscle in the throat.

The world of films can provide many other examples of unusual physical construction in its stars. It is not generally known, for instance that Leslie Howard has a profusely tattoed chest. The main illustration is a representation of the Repeal of the Corn Laws, though there are many minor *motifs* sketched around the "big picture," as he calls it, including a cruel cartoon of John Gielgud as Hamlet. But for this little peculiarity, Howard thinks he would have been cast as Tarzan long before this.

Robert Taylor is another case. His second toe is much longer than his big toe, a peculiarity which the star takes very much to heart. He is rarely seen bathing at Malibu Beach without wearing a pair of bedsocks specially run up for him by Greta Garbo.

George Arliss is probably the only film-star in the world with two heads. Both are exactly alike and Mr. Arliss is careful not to show any favouritism. They take it in turn to appear in his pictures, although there was a little trouble when both wanted to appear as the Duke of Wellington. When it was explained that it only meant putting on a comic hat, the dispute was amicably settled.

And did you know that Groucho Marx's cigar is really his own tongue rolled up and stuck out? The tip is treated with some chemical that allows it to be lighted and puffed like a real cigar. You *didn't* know that? Don't you *ever* read or anything?

*Where's Miss Bergner?*

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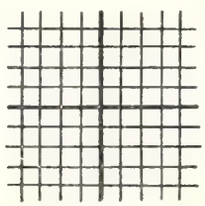

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# Book Reviews

**HOW TO WRITE A MOVIE**, by Arthur L. Gale (Pitman, 7*s* 6*d*)

This is an extraordinary book. It is packed with every sort of practical information and analysis. It indicates in simple terms all the technical possibilities at the disposal of the amateur. It devotes a great many useful pages to script and scenario. It has an excellent glossary and index.

But it has one very serious omission. There is practically no mention at all of the creative possibilities of the amateur film. The examples given are all of poorish amateur theatricals, rather depressing "How-I-spent-my-holidays" films, and so on.

The reason for this appears to be the fact that the book is by an American on Americans, and it is interesting to note how completely the documentary on social aspects of amateur work have failed to register as yet in the U.S.A.

We may congratulate ourselves on our British amateurs, and recommend this book with the warning that they should concentrate on its excellent technical suggestions and avoid the examples.

C.M.

**DECENCY IN MOTION PICTURES** (Macmillan, $1)

The author of this book is Martin Quigley, controller of the most powerful section of the American film press, and artificer of many of the great changes which have come over the motion picture industry during the past ten years. In 1925 when still editor of the *Exhibitors Herald* in Chicago, he was unique among trade journalists and film men in preaching the social responsibility of the cinema.

The book describes the "obligations, functions, standards and responsibilities," and rates the "tardiness of social leadership" in the world of cinema. There is an analysis of why a number of pictures represent wrong ethical standards and there is a publication in detail of the Production Code.

The best thing about this useful book is its indication of the fact that the most progressive forces in cinema have invariably come from within the industry. It is a necessary corrective to the many gratuitous busy bodies who have only recently discovered cinema, to be told that there have been reformers in the industry since 1900.

The worst thing about the book is that its standards of morality are too blankety high. *I'm No Angel* is described as a vehicle for "a notorious characterisation of a scarlet woman whose amatory instincts are confined exclusively to the physical: there is no more pretence of romance than on a stud farm: it is not without humour but the humour partakes of the burlesque theatre." Old admirers of burlesque are not going to swallow this, nor the standards that go with it. In bathing the undoubtedly dirty baby of movie, it is too bad to throw Mae West out with the bath water.

One may however be in a pagan minority. Everyone who wants to see the cinema in pursuit of virtue (Satyric or otherwise) must add this book to his collection. It provides excellent material for both schools of thought.

J.G.

# £11,000,000—£10,000,000=?

## *by a well-known Wardour Street figure*

Two circumstances, simple in themselves, extraordinary in the fact that they should be happening together, marks out the present time as unique in the history of the British film industry.

On the one hand, after nine years' operation of the quota act, the British production industry is going bankrupt on a wholesale scale; on the other, the Board of Trade is giving serious attention to the recommendation of a Commission, known as the Lord Moyne Committee, to continue the Quota Act, with a substantial increase in the percentage of British films required.

Homeopathy is a medical principle which consists of giving the patient a little of the disease from which he is suffering, or about to suffer so that his system might get used to it, and fortify itself against the main onslaught. The homeopathy of the Moyne Report consists of giving the patient about twice as much of the disease as has already proved a fatal dose.

Several years ago, John Maxwell summed up the position of British films in a pithy question.

"If eleven million pounds had been spent on film production, and only ten million pounds had been earned, what would you say was the position?" he asked.

You're allowed one guess for the answer, and you're right. The position is this:

Every type of British film has been tried. Gaumont-British have made ambitious subjects on an expensive, but not too expensive scale, the cost being calculated to be recoverable by releasing the films in America. But the films did not earn anything like the amount in America that was needed. Hagen made less ambitious films for this country, but the market was too limited. Korda made ambitious pictures that challenged the American films in quality and "size," but the cost has been terrific.

Gaumont-British, consequently, have decided to cut production from their programme, and to concentrate on their theatres, writing off the loss; Hagen has had to explain what and why to his creditors; Korda is still trying to find a formula to balance the production budget in the big picture field.

The essence of the production situation is simply this: whether one makes super films, or quickies, they cannot compete successfully with pictures of equal quality made by a country that has four times the market to sell them in.

The effort to do the impossible has been made; it has failed. The insurance companies and banks who looked with a kindly eye on the film business when the quota act offered attractive protection, have turned cold; and their eye, when you ask them for money, has a bleak look.

British production, which the Quota Act was passed to encourage, has simply fallen away. A large proportion of the pictures now being made are being made by the American companies, who have set up their own production units here, while the independent British producer is having an exceedingly lean time.

The British pictures made merely for quota purposes, are worse than useless for the real purpose intended. They have done all that could be done to lower the prestige of British pictures in the eyes of patrons in this country and through the Empire. A few years ago, Australia, for instance, gave us a magnificent opportunity by starting a chain of theatres in which only British films were shown. They flourished awhile, and then the venture failed with decisive completeness.

And at this time, of all times, the Moyne Report recommends increasing the quota, to a maximum of fifty per cent.

The problem arises, if the British Industry can lose a million pounds in nine years, and with a quota rising from 7½ per cent. to 20 per cent, how much can it lose in the like period, with a quota rising from 20 per cent. to 50 per cent?

The answer is wrong, in any case, because the banks will see to that long before the "optimistic" figure is reached.

¶ World Film News *is glad to publish this independent view-point because of the importance of its source—but thinks differently. It is very much concerned about the future of the independent film-maker who needs quota to help him.—Ed.*


Forthcoming Books

**MOVIE MERRY-GO-ROUND**

by

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A breezy, half-technical, half-popular, account of the whole business of cinema from casting to ballyhoo, from the studio to the local cinema. With special guest chapters by Joan Crawford, Jessie Matthews, Walt Disney, Adrian Brunel, and an introduction by Madeleine Carroll. 7*s.* 6*d. net*

**THE CINEMA AS A GRAPHIC ART**

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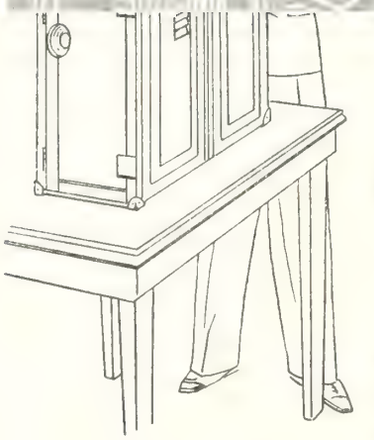
*From the G.B. Instructional Film "The Story of a Disturbance"*



# TEACHING FROM THE LIVING FACT

*"It is commonplace to say that the cinema has placed new powers in the hands of the educationalist but few educationalists have really grasped what its new powers are. So far the cinema has largely been canvassed as a way of stimulating interest or of conveying in a more vivid and palatable form information which is less attractive when communicated through the medium of print. What we have still to realise is that it can explain many things which many people can never understand at all, if they have to rely on the printed word."* —

*LANCELOT HOGBEN*
*(Professor of Social Biology in the University of London).*

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# *The Stubborn Logic of Youth*

HOWEVER illogical the wayward fancies of children may appear to the less perceptive mind of the adult, the child's imagination is in fact governed by a stubborn sense of logic, whose premises are invariably stimulated by the eye.

Ellen Terry tells in her *Memoirs* of her efforts to persuade her small son to learn by heart a poem by Black the last line of which ended "And all the hills are covered by sheep." All went well until the last line was reached. And there the small boy most firmly stuck. "All covered with" grass, trees, snow, stones—yes, everything but the poet's sheep. Nothing could induce him to add that tiresome word, even when tearfully prompted by his mother and sister. Hills, he knew well enough, were nearly always covered with grass, often with trees, and sometimes with snow—but as for sheep covering hills, it was patently absurd.

To a child, seeing is believing. It is in the *deductions* from their visually-stimulated beliefs that children achieve their most delightfully wayward fancies.

## Brain, eye and ear

It is this fact which is the principle of modern methods of education. Educationists everywhere have become aware that the brain must be stimulated by co-operation with eye and ear. Old systems which crammed the brains with an indigestible and undigested mass of facts are rightly discredited. The methods demanding that children should live only to learn, have been discarded for the more sensible order that they must learn so that they may live—in the widest sense of the word.

There is, of course, little novelty in educational methods which lay stress on this co-operation between mind and ear, between mind and eye.

Even to savage races and to mankind living in the dawn of intelligence, some traditions, some elementary knowledge, some stories of ancestors, were handed down from generation to generation. As the group or tribe grew stronger, so more detailed and more necessary did oral instruction become. But later on legend and story alone were not enough to ensure that knowledge was acquired and understood. Thus man turned to the only alternative medium—the eye, and primitive drawings worked with primitive instruments resulted.

Slowly then, were evolved symbols for speech. Words too should achieve some measure of imperishability ; and thus were alphabets constructed.

It is well to remember that modern methods of using diagrams or pictures to convey and stimulate a thought, are only a development of the primitive realisation that drawing was an apter means of passing on instruction than words alone.

## Bulk of knowledge

If primitive men had need of these methods, then how much more are they needed to-day! Progress in every art and science has created an alarming bulk of facts, which must, in one person or another, be passed on to subsequent generations. The tendency to specialisation to-day is but one result of the incredible multiplication of scientific knowledge in recent years.

How then may all this knowledge be most easily absorbed, and so presented that it may be developed in the future? Here is the educationist's most urgent problem. His object is to stimulate the mind directly by such means as handcraft, rhythm, in sound and movement, by training the eye to observe and ultimately to co-ordinate observation by reason. For the ear there are lectures, radio-talks, gramophone records—all of which help the teacher in his task. But the eye until recently, has only partly fulfilled its purpose. Pictures, diagrams and photography have not kept pace adequately with other educational developments.

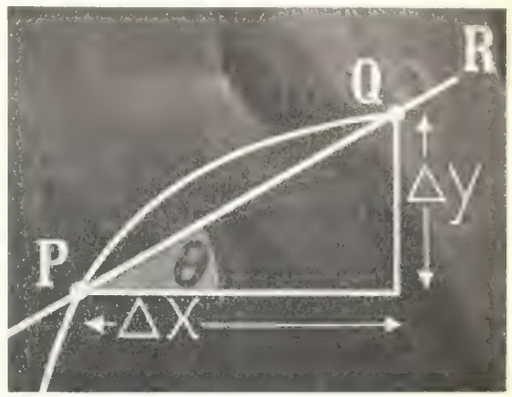
It is surprising that the most accessible of all forms of instructions is also the most neglected. The cinema, whose whole development has taken place within the lifetime of most of to-day's teachers, is an instrument of education which is the logical successor to the drawings of primitive man. Its language is universal, its appeal direct, easily assimilated and above all, stimulating.

## Facile stimulation

The commercial film has appealed largely to the mediocre intelligence because of its facile stimulation of the tired mind through the eye. It is this facility of stimulation which forms the educationist's chief argument for the wider use of the instructional film.

Its possibilities are immense, and its scope without limit. The film can re-create history, give reality to columns of statistics, illuminate a meaningless formula, explain the mysteries of Nature, and can people the map with nations. Properly used, the film is the most powerful weapon that has ever been put into the hands of the instructor. The diagram has been given life, and the picture endowed with the reality of movement. Seeing is believing. To this phrase the film has given a wider meaning. It provides the answer to the small boy who refuses to be convinced that the poet's hills were covered with sheep, and in answering him solves the teacher's most difficult problem: that of giving his pupils a mental conception of the facts on which his future learning is to be based. P.V.M.

RATE OF CHANGE (A short technical film.)
*By A. D. Segaller, B.Sc.*




*Rate of Change* is an 8-minute instructional film on the Differential Calculus. Animated diagrams are used, the aim being to provide a visual introduction to this important branch of Mathematics, which must be mastered be every boy taking up Science or Engineering.

To illustrate vividly the idea of a "rate of change," the film makes use of a familiar type of change—a car gathering speed. Also, by means of close-ups, the idea of a "limit" is shown—that is, a quantity (in this case *average* speed) which approaches nearer and nearer to a certain value (*instantaneous* speed) without quite reaching it.

The film, which is on 16 mm. negative (silent), will probably be distributed by Messrs. Visual Education Ltd.

* * *

The Empire Tea Market Expansion Bureau effectively drew attention to itself last month by giving daily film shows inside the entrance of the Charing Cross Underground Station. The films included *Tea Pot Town*, a technicolor cartoon; *Tea Time Topics*, made by Publicity Films; *Island of Contrasts* and *Gardens of the Orient*, both made from surplus stock exposed by Basil Wright when filming *Song of Ceylon*, and edited by Gaumont-British Instructional; and *Romantic India*, also edited by Gaumont-British from stock belonging to the Indian Government.


**CLEVER, YES—**

*but would it sell lipstick to that blonde in the tobacco kiosk?*

Some films are "clever" in inverted commas. Others are clever to only the expert eye. We prefer to make films the cleverness of which is in their appeal to the audience's emotions and buying habits. Come to our private theatre and see what we've done for other advertisers.

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# *The Fine Flower of Chivalry*

At Aldershot military meeting the fine flower of English chivalry turn out to run the Army's own steeplechase meeting—fair women and brave men cluster round while owner-riders face the jumps. Of course it is the Army's own show, but one knows how difficult it is to keep outsiders at bay. Those impossible newsreel people are there, with the following delightful result in British Paramount:

(general views)

Yes, rather, this is no ordinary steeplechase. By jove no. It's the Aldershot military meeting, an Army affair, a grander national than anything at Aintree. The Service is in the saddle. But a soldier, by any other uniform, looks just as fascinating; awfully smart, frightfully winning, no slackness . . .

(paddock scene)

See them come out of the paddock: well-groomed, properly turned out: so hard for a girl to keep a stiff upper lip. It's terribly exciting . . .

(the start)

And by jove they're off. We shall be awfully thrilled. It's so terribly difficult to keep calm as they take the jumps—the military in the saddle. Of course you've heard that the Army's frightfully mechanized now: motors and things: yes, even the cavalry. But still there's no sight like the military in the saddle . . .

(rider "comes a cropper")

Part of it's out now: Cholmondely took a toss—awfully tough luck: but the rest go on. If you can keep your seat when all about you are losing theirs—you know, the Kipling spirit—you'll be a man, my son, and all that. Another jump . . .

(another rider does likewise)

Fortescue falls. What did you say, sir? Thank God we've got a Navy? I resent that . . .

(last jump)

But who cares? Here's the last jump, and they're all over, and so's the race, bar shouting:

Let's go and have a drink.

Much more of this sort of thing and the newsreels will be cut by all decent people. But the rest of us are unanimous that for the above effort, British Paramount score ten out of ten. Bull's eye—penny back—cigar—another shot.

R.F.

# NEWSREEL RUSHES

## *by the Commentator*

### Coronation Newsreels

Before this issue of *W.F.N.* has had time to collect more than two or three specks of soot on the nation's newstands, the British newsreels will have completed what is probably the biggest job they have ever tackled. For in 1910 they had hardly learned to walk; and of all the events that have flashed across the screen in the intervening years, the essentially visual pageantry of the Coronation will make an historic news story that will lend itself perhaps better than any to film reporting.

Well handled, the newsreel will beat even the best from the pen or the broadcast microphone. The newsreel machine stands ready—long years of use have run in the bearings—months of overhaul have double-crossed every possibility of breakdown—throbbing power awaits the touch on the controls. Now—all depends on the men who will handle those controls. Something of what they hope to achieve has been gathered from much talk at personal interviews—much reading of official announcements. Some of the statements are vague enough faintly to suggest that they are still wondering which position of the lever is top gear and which is reverse.

### Some Coronation Plans

First mention naturally falls to Movietone for promising a full picture in colour. It should make newsreel history. But of course the fairly complicated processing required by almost every colour system, rules out the possibility of Movietone's colour story being out by Coronation evening, or even the next day. So Movietone will produce a normal black and white picture for more direct competition with other reels.

Pathé and Movietone between them are dealing with the actual filming inside Westminster Abbey—though the pictures will be shared by the other reels.

Much has been made of this concession to the newsreels, but actually they will be working under tremendous difficulties. Since cameras and cameramen will have to be absolutely invisible from the Abbey floor—cameras must be set and focused in advance—then bolted down and covered in to prevent noise. Panning or changing lenses during the ceremony will be out of the question. Six cameras will be used—focused on the points where key-parts of the ceremony will take place. It is even now uncertain whether there will be sufficient light to ensure more than 50 per cent. exposure on the fastest black and white stock—and daily more uncertain whether Technicolor inside the Abbey will be possible at all. Finally—not one foot of the Abbey ceremony can be issued before it has been viewed by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Duke of Norfolk at a Piccadilly News Theatre on Coronation afternoon. So there is little hope of the Abbey pictures being shown within 24 hours of the issue of the first "outside" rush copies.

Gaumont-British and Universal advance information is being handed out wholesale by General Film Distributors—who, since the G.B. dissolution, are selling both reels. And the G.F.D. ad-men don't seem to be finding it easy to boost two reels side by side—in fact the effort is showing up distinct signs of vocabulary strain.

Paramount's promised Coronation stunt is a "shooting script"—with a copy carried by each cameraman. The object of this scheme is perfectly clear—to Paramount! "It will add to the speed of distribution employed by the cameramen." Presumably if an unrehearsed incident happens under the nose of one of the cameramen, he won't shoot it because "it isn't in the Script."

Paramount also announce that, as each cameraman sends in his exposed negative "the editing department will be receiving from minute to minute portions of the film, which will be *rapidly assembled and rushed out* to theatres." Of course, if Paramount can arrange for their Coronation special to be sent out in ten foot lengths, apart from improving the continuity, it will give exhibitors the chance of turning editors!

* * * *

Gaumont-British are promising wonders in air delivery—which isn't really a bad line to take, since the Coronation will be one of the all-too-few occasions when people will be attracted to the cinemas by the newsreels—and the "first out" will draw the crowds. The G.B. list of fliers reads like the entry sheet of a hypothetical trans-atlantic air race—headed by Jim Mollison, who hopes to fly to Edinburgh and Glasgow in under two hours.

* * * *

Paramount say they will have 50 cameramen, each exposing 500 ft. of stock—total 25,000 ft.

Movietone promise 40,000 ft. to be exposed.

But evidently G.B. and Universal are in quite a different class—for "*both* will *each* film over a million feet."

Now it only remains for Pathé to announce a 1,000 ft. cut story from 1,500 ft. of exposed negative!

### Ballyhoo

For the rest, the advance Coronation newsreel information is a maze of super-clichés. Samples:

A trade paper: "Sound will be judiciously employed."

Movietone: "European commentators will describe the pageant with first-hand knowledge. No money has been spared. Complete and comprehensive plans have been made."

Pathé: "Every sphere of everyday activity is being utilised by the organisation. To top the best efforts of the past is an achievement desired to be accomplished."

Gaumont British: "Scores of cameras will be placed at vantage points."

Universal: "A complete organisation has been built up to deal with every contingency that may arise from the physical shooting of the scenes."

Paramount: "Will shoot every detail of the ceremonies."

* * * *

But perhaps the palm should go to Paramount for the promise that every cameraman will have a "racing motor-cyclist to rush the film back to the laboratories immediately the procession has passed." Perhaps if they drive fast enough they may be able to beat the procession!

# RADIO AND TELEVISION

## Notes of the Month
### by George Audit

It is a common opinion that the B.B.C. voice is tedious. Listening to news items, talks and announcements night after night induces a mild disgust at the too even, too unruffled, too impersonal tones. It comes almost as a shock of relief to get away from National programme voices and hear the voice of Frank Nichols in a Harry Hopeful programme from the North, or a shop assistant in a Midland debate.

In the days of its youthful enthusiasm the B.B.C. began to work out a science of voice production. People like Lewis and Sieveking tried to discover by tests and critical listening what voices were most suitable to the microphone's peculiar requirements. They found out that a speaker can obtain subtler effects by varying his distance from the microphone, and that the voice must be pitched at an optimum level. They also learned that the microphone is a cunning detector of affectation. It will quickly give you away if you try "putting it on." The declamatory style was found to be quite unsuitable for radio. That is confirmed by the failure of big politicians or actors to make a success of broadcasting. Thus the gardener, C. H. Middleton, is infinitely more successful as a broadcast speaker than Winston Churchill or Marlene Dietrich, and the value of Basil Maine as a broadcast music critic is sadly impaired by his skill as an orator.

Time has shown that if a speaker really has something to say he can overcome almost any limitations in his voice. It would be hard to imagine voices less melodious than those of H. G. Wells or Dr. George Dyson, the music critic, yet both were quite popular as speakers. Perhaps the most delightful speaker to listen to is G. Bernard Shaw who is confident at the microphone and has the most natural and easy delivery.

### Inferior Voices

Of late years there has been a tendency to discriminate less against speakers who have inferior voices. The B.B.C. is taking up the attitude that a speaker shall be chosen solely for his ability, unless his voice is almost inaudible. Improvements in the quality of transmissions have encouraged the tendency. On the whole that seems to be a reasonable attitude.

There is apparently the same indiscrimination in the selection of announcers, which is quite a different kettle of fish. Announcers were once allowed to have a name and a suggestion of personality. Rex Palmer, Burrows, Cecil Lewis were all real people and what they said and read seemed interesting. Their successors are but shadows, poor anonymous abstractions of scarcely determinate sex, tied to a script, their pronunciations and modulations closely regulated, reflecting culture without character. If there is any theory behind the employment and regulation of such unfortunate individuals it can only be the half-baked notion that news and announcements are impersonal and that no personality or idiosyncrasy should intrude itself between the fact and the audience. The first misconception here is that broadcast announcements are seldom if ever statements of fact or descriptions of actual events. News bulletins are general recitations of other people's reports. Secondly even if the announcements were eye-witness descriptions they can best be put over by a lively personality, witness the success of American commentators.

In feature productions the B.B.C. have done practically nothing to enlarge the number of available voices. My impression is that they rely too much on professionals like Robert Farquarson who may have some fine performances to his credit but has been overdone. Producers seem afraid to let the technician or worker tell his own story as he does in the documentary film. In Manchester they have discovered new voices and new, vital characters by sending their catalytic agent, Harry Hopeful, out into the lanes and streets of England. Harry Hopeful is an enormous acquisition to broadcasting. He and his radio acquaintances have broken down the cult of the cultivated voice. I believe that in London and the rest of England there are bricklayers, fishermen and farmers with voices and characters every bit as good as Harry's, but the B.B.C. will not find them until it gets down to making programmes about real people.

## *Backstairs Sponsorship*

The B.B.C. rightly despises American sponsored programmes. Even its most bitter critics imagine the B.B.C. is free of financial corruption. It is therefore all the more alarming to learn that the Controller of Programmes has just issued a private instruction that future programmes should if possible "avoid giving offence to advertisers in B.B.C. publications."

On turning up the latest balance sheet I find that the profits on B.B.C. publications amount to something over £500,000 per annum. This sum is chiefly accumulated from advertisement revenue in *Radio Times*.

The B.B.C. keeps a close guard on what it happily describes as the integrity of the microphone. While it is prepared to interfere with its programmes for the sake of keeping advertisers sweet is it maintaining quite the same close watch over the integrity of its advertisement pages? As a matter of interest I turned up a recent issue of *Radio Times* and discovered some extraordinary advertisements. "Disfigured with pimples!" "Constipation!" "Crippled with rheumatism!" were the alarming headlines. Advertisers asked such questions as: "Nauseous gas or wind?" "Constant dropping of phlegm?"

If talks are being interfered with for the sake of pleasing such inquisitors have we not a system of backstairs sponsoring? Is the B.B.C. so pushed for money that it dare not offend a few wealthy advertisers?

---

★Tuesday, May 25th, 6.25 p.m.: *The Emperor Jones*. By Eugene O'Neill. Production: Creswell. NATIONAL. 7.45 p.m.: *Pelleas and Melisande*, Act 1. From Covent Garden. REGIONAL.

Wednesday, May 26th, 8.15 p.m.: Feature programme. *Louisa Wants a Bicycle*. Production: Allen. REGIONAL.

## B.B.C. Events

Saturday, May 1st, 2.45 p.m.: Cup Final. Commentary from Wembley. NATIONAL.

Sunday, May 2nd, 6.30 p.m.: *May Day*. By Purcell. Production: McConnel. REGIONAL.

Monday, May 3rd, 7.30 p.m.: *We Gave Our Grandmother*. Play by Richard Hughes. Production: Sieveking. REGIONAL. 7.45 p.m.: *Mr. Penny*. Episode 5. NATIONAL.

Wednesday, May 5th, 8.0 p.m.: *Eight Bells*. Play by Mungo Dewar. Production: Pepper. NATIONAL.

Thursday, May 6th, 7.55 p.m.: *Alceste*, Act I. From Covent Garden. REGIONAL.

★Friday, May 7th, 7.30 p.m.: Feature Programme. *King's Health*. Production: Felton. REGIONAL. 8.0 p.m.: *Scrapbook for* 1902. Production: Brewer. NATIONAL.

Saturday, May 8th, 3.45 p.m.: Rugby League Final. Commentary from Wembley. NATIONAL. 7.30 p.m.: *A.B.C.* Production: Hanson. Devised by Alan Keith. NATIONAL.

★Sunday, May 9th, 9.20 p.m.: Feature Programme: *The King's Anointing*. Production: Felton. REGIONAL.

★Monday, May 10th, 7.40 p.m. (and on May 11th, 13th, 14th and 15th): *In Town Tonight*. Production: Hanson. NATIONAL. 8.0 p.m.: *Dear Brutus*. By J. M. Barrie. Production: Gielgud. NATIONAL.

Tuesday, May 11th, 9.0 p.m.: *Carmen*, Act 2. From Covent Garden. REGIONAL.

★Wednesday, May 12th, 10.15 a.m. and and 2.15 p.m.: Coronation Broadcast. 7.20 p.m.: The Empire's Homage. 8.0 p.m.: H.M. The King. NATIONAL and REGIONAL. 8.15 p.m.: *Coronation Party*. Production: Brewer. NATIONAL.

Thursday, May 13th, 5.0 p.m.: M.C.C. v. New Zealand. Commentary from Lord's. NATIONAL.

Friday, May 14th, 4 p.m.: Feature Programme. *Some are Born Great*. Production: Pudney. NATIONAL.

Saturday, May 15th, 8.0 p.m.: Feature Programme. *The Duchy of Cornwall*. REGIONAL. 9.50 p.m.: Recorded programme of Coronation week. NATIONAL.

★Sunday, May 16th, 9.5 p.m.: *Midsummer Night's Dream*. By Shakespeare. Production: Creswell. REGIONAL.

Tuesday, May 18th, 8.10 p.m.: The Prime Minister. Speech from Albert Hall. NATIONAL.

Wednesday, May 19th, 7.50 p.m.: Gracie Fields. From Rochdale. NATIONAL.

Sunday, May 23rd, 7.30 p.m.: *The Black Prince*. Play. Production: Cheatle. NATIONAL. 9.5 p.m.: *The Miracle at Lodz*. Play. Production: Sieveking. REGIONAL

Monday, May 24th, 8.30 p.m.: Empire Day Programme, from India and Ceylon. NATIONAL.

*Continued in preceding column*

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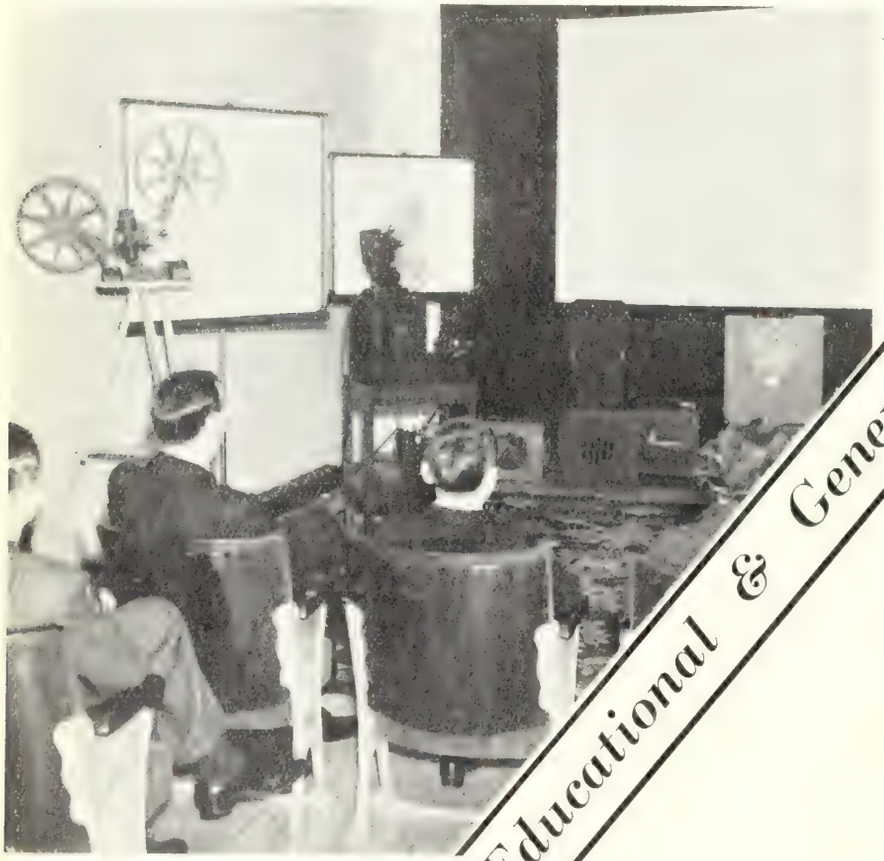

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# *KEEP YOUR FILMS—GIVE US YOUR SCRAP HEAP*

## A famous educationist points out the potential value of film material scrapped by commercial companies

THE famous educationist Dr. Robert Rusk says "If only the film companies would let us rake through their bins for scrap, we should be quite happy. But no; we know what's wanted, and we know how to use it, but we can't get it. Every time the big companies make a film like *David Copperfield* or *Berkeley Square*, they must throw away enough first-class material to make any amount of teaching films. All we ask is the free run of their midden."

"Time, like an ever-rolling stream bears all the films away: they fly forgotten, as a dream dies at the opening day." For many years teachers have stood by impotent while the material they covet so much floats swiftly past. They covet the histories and biographies, which vanish within the year. They covet the *March of Time*, which vanishes within the month. They covet the newsreels which vanish within the week.

### Settings, not story

Not that they want to use the films *in toto*. Theatrical films are seldom true to historical and biographical fact. Many of them, particularly musicals, are deliberately false. But the settings: Dickens's London, Clive's India, Davy Garrick's Old Drury, Elizabeth's England, Claudius's Rome, Savonarola's Florence; the settings represent the closest possible approach to accurate reconstruction. It is so much easier to be faithful in representing things than persons. *Mutiny on the Bounty* probably gave no better than a musical-comedy version of the manners of 18th-century sailors; but the sea and the ships and the rigging and the island, the costumes, uniforms, weapons, furniture, carefully reconstructed from old prints and paintings, must surely be fairly accurate. Charles Laughton is no more like Henry VIII than Rembrandt was like either: but Vincent Korda's Tudor interiors are probably as nearly authentic as no matter. The teacher does not grieve when Laughton's Henry is junked—he sighs because jug and bottle, window and table, stomacher and kirtle follow him to the vaults of Wardour Street.

It seems that Gaumont-British Instructional somehow heard the sigh: for they recently approached London Films for permission to lift the Banquet scene and the Hunting and Hawking sequence out of the film for inclusion in their special programmes devised for L.C.C. teachers. In this they had the courtesy and collaboration of London Films: in itself a good omen, indicating that the trade is now concerned for the preservation of the more permanently valuable features of its productions. But what are the film producers to do? They obviously cannot reissue films after they have been withdrawn; they would very soon be the victims of pirates whom even now they do not entirely escape. As a matter of ordinary commonsense, they have to call in all copies at the end of the renting period and destroy them.

Nevertheless they show their good faith by welcoming a centralised system of preservation. The National Film Library provides it, in a skeleton form. This library preserves copies of outstanding films against the future. Within the limits imposed by copyright difficulties and lack of money, the Film Institute is even able to do a certain amount of reissuing. Something like a dozen commercial primitives including *The Great Train Robbery* and *Simple Charity* have been issued, mainly to Film Societies, in the course of the last year. The goodwill of the film producing companies extends freely to this scheme for preservation and ultimate reissue. Will it extend further to re-editing—to the project of creating new films out of the fabric of the old?

Why not? School films re-edited from a theatrical film bear no obvious relation to the original as a complete work. They are different in scale and scope, in purpose and effect, in their very nature; they cannot be said to compete in any way with the original film from which their material is taken. The teachers do not want potted versions of the films, which would preserve their narrative value: they want shorts and snippets, illustrating their own material; they want the *Hispaniola*, not Jackie Cooper as Jim Hawkins: the curricles and cabs of old London, not Leslie Howard; street scenes, prairies, seascapes, interiors, jungle pictures, theatres, old houses, divorced from Nova Pilbeam, Clark Gable, Laughton, Walter Huston and the rest.

It is clear that facilities for this work of selection and recreation could not be lightly granted, or the trade might soon be the victims of commercial sharks posing as education experts and reaping a rich harvest with theatrical shorts. Facilities would have to be granted only to some central and responsible authority representing not only the teachers but also the trade. There should be no great difficulty about this, so far as the trade is concerned, for by collaborating in the work of the National Film Library they have already shown themselves to be aware of the cultural issues involved in the junking of films. But the enterprise would have to be conducted on a central, national scale, financed with public money, supervised by responsible and authoritative educationists. The organisation of such a service might well take some time but it would be worth it. Experimentation would be necessary: all concerned would have to be willing to learn. Film producers would have to forget their old illusion that they know what teachers want: teachers would have to recognise that cutting and editing can't be learned overnight, and the Board of Education would have to stand in, supply the money, and hold a watching brief.

It is worth remembering that the claims of education are especially recognised in the law of copyright and printed matter.

Precedents also exist of course in film. The first considerable achievement in re-editing entertainment films for education purposes was made when the Empire Marketing Board created "Conquest," a history of American development, out of bits of *The Covered Waggon* and *The Thundering Herd*. It was an immense success. G.B.I. have frequently used material of theatrical origin for educational purposes, and have ambitions to raid the Gaumont vaults for further material when they can find time from their own production.

### Paramount pioneers

Now from America comes the news that Paramount have prepared education films based on *The Plainsman* and *The Maid of Salem*, to be circulated to schools, in advance of the big films, complete with teaching notes and stills. They propose to make this the beginning of a series of educational "trailers." M.G.M. did much the same with *Romeo and Juliet*. This movement is most interesting. School films are never likely to make much money (as the film world understand money, anyhow) and the practice of sending out these shorts *ahead* of the parent film is an ingenious method of serving the schools, and at the same time serving commercial interests. It also shows pretty complete recognition of the fact that a school film does not compete with the big film from which it is made. An interesting coincidence is that "The Spirit of the Plain" (*i.e.* the *Plainsman* trailer) uses bits of *The Thundering Herd* and *The Covered Wagon*, the very same films as the E.M.B. used many years ago.

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# NEWS FROM AMATEUR CLUBS

**Producing *"Room 17"*—Bognor Regis Film Society.**

**BOGNOR REGIS FILM SOCIETY:** Patron: Ralph Lynn. Hon. Secretary: Miss L. Cornish, "Southernhay," New Barn Lane, Felpham, Bognor Regis.

The Third Annual Public Show was held on March 10th to 13th last at the Roof Garden Theatre, Bognor Regis. The attendance surpassed all previous years, and the audience was appreciative. Ralph Lynn was unable to attend but he sent the Society a telegram of good wishes.

The programme was headed by *Room* 17 (the Society's latest production), a comedy-drama featuring the Bognor Regis first Carnival Queen and directed by H. L. Guermonprez. The supporting films—made entirely by members—were *Bognor Regis Carnival*, made in Kodachrome; *Continental Cafe*, a Moko the Monk cartoon; *Symphony of the Seasons*, shot in colour by Barry Hart and directed by H. L. Guermonprez; and *Regis Review*, a newsreel of local events of the year. Stanley Burgess and His Band, who featured in *Room* 17, provided stage entertainment.

The technical department are now preparing scripts for their 1937-8 programmes. During the past few weeks, members have seen films from Salford, Bournemouth and Eltham Cine Clubs, and on April 20th they visited Portsmouth Cine Society for their first public Show.

**BLACKHEATH FILM CLUB:** Hon. Secretary, John Gibson, 6 St. German's Place, London, S.E.3. Programme Secretary: Ralph Cathles, 77 Hervey Road, S.E.3.

The Society's studio and theatre is a hall converted and fixed with an exterior projection box. Current production is a comedy of the Naughty Nineties on 16mm. which is being processed by one of the members. Productions to date include four dramas on 9.5 mm.; two comedies, one 16 mm. and one 9.5 mm.; three 16 mm. cine magazines; and several newsreels. These, together with three members' films, are available for loan or hire to other Clubs and Societies.

Two story films a year are scheduled for the future; reserve cameramen and technical experts being organised into local newsreel squads. The 9.5 mm. newsreel and the 16 mm. news-magazine will be produced for alternate monthly projection meetings. Programmes will also include the best of the amateur films available, and sub-standard versions of outstanding professional films. G.P.O. and Empire films are regular features. Periodical demonstrations, lectures and discussions will also be held.

Acting membership subscription is 10*s.* and non-acting 5*s.*

**ACE MOVIES:** Hon. Secretary, Channon Wood, 15 Openview, S.W.18: Studio, 90 High Street Mews, Wimbledon, S.W.19.

Atmosphere shots for *Luna Park* were recently obtained in the Kursaal, Southend. Ace Movies wish to place on record appreciation to the Southend Cine Society who obtained the necessary permission to work in the Kursaal grounds and who assisted the unit in selecting various vantage points for camera angles.

The two productions announced last month are under way, but there is still room for new members to participate if they apply within the next week or so. Visitors are always welcome at the studio on Thursdays and Sundays between 8.30 and 11 p.m.

The Secretaries of amateur clubs are asked to supply news of current activities regularly each month. Copy for next number should reach the Editor by May 8th.

**MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, J. Alex Parker, 5-6 Bluecoats Chambers, Liverpool, 1. Hon. Secretary of Amateur Film Unit, Muriel A. Bird.

On April 9th, following a business meeting of the A.F.U., two films made by the Institute's producing unit were shown—*Morning Boat*, produced by the 16 mm. Group, and *The Rise of Liverpool*, produced by the 9.5 mm. Group. *Ferry Boats*, directed by G. H. Hesketh, a member of the A.F.U., was also included in the programme. This film was awarded a certificate by the Royal Photographic Society and a plaque by "The Amateur Cine World."

*The Deserter*, Pudovkin's first sound film, headed the bill on Friday, April 23rd, which also included *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, Roosevelt National Recovery Administration film, and *Water Babies*, a coloured Silly Symphony.

The following Monday Mr. Oliver Bell, General Manager of the British Film Institute, talked about the Institute's work during the season with particular reference to the Merseyside branch.

**THE FILM AND PHOTO LEAGUE:** Hon. Secretary, H. Cuthbertson, 3 Somerset Terrace, London, W.C.1.

Formed at the end of 1934, the League aims at producing films showing the lives and aspirations of the vast mass of British citizens to-day. It encourages the use of motion and still photography in exposing and combating the evils of war, reaction and taboos, and is seeking a new cinematic approach to child entertainment. It now plans to produce films on a much larger scale.

Amateur technicians, actors, scenarists, cameramen, writers, publicity experts, etc., are urgently needed.

**ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY:**

After the Annual General Meeting of the Kinematograph Section, H. Chevalier, F.P.S., A.S.E., delivered a lecture with film illustrations on "The Special Effects Department."

To the uninitiated the tremendous amount of care and patience revealed in trick effects of film was most impressive.

Elaborate diagrams were given to illustrate the mathematical process by which certain very high buildings were apparently photographed in full. Mr. Chevalier also demonstrated how a mirrored effect could satisfactorily be obtained by means of a special arrangement of a flap and a prism in the lens itself, so that the reflection was actually made in the camera.

Another method of the same type was the bi-focal lens, a kind of ball and socket mechanism which brought both foreground and background into sharp focus together. Mr. Chevalier had made a detailed diagram of this. The usefulness of the bi-focal lens was shown on the screen by enlargements from *Midsumer Night's Dream*, *Green Pastures* and *Bullets or Ballots*.

Throughout the evening, a great variety of film sequences and lantern slides illustrated, among other things, how snow and ice were manufactured and how some of the more puzzling parts of *Devil Doll*, *Things to Come*, *The Beloved Vagabond*, *Dark Journey*, etc. were achieved. The lecturer also dealt with the Armada sequence in *Fire Over England* and the giant revolving stage from *The Great Ziegfeld*. The apparatus used in the latter was the Cook Varo Lens of which there are thirteen in existence, one in England and twelve in Hollywood.

# *FILMING BRITAIN*—*No. 1. of a New Series of Articles*

## *By Evelyn Spice*

**Evelyn Spice, director of a number of documentary films for the G.P.O. film unit, among them *Weather Forecast* and *Calendar of the Year*, has been appointed consultant on matters of interest to Amateurs. Any information required or questions to be answered will be dealt with by her if letters are addressed to Oxford House, 9 Oxford Street, W.1.**

With the fine weather on its way, amateurs all over the country will be discussing ideas and scripts for their next production.

Why not, this year, make a film which will find a permanent place in school libraries and non-theatrical travelling shows? Why not make a record of some part of British life which will remain of great value long after the story-book film has been forgotten?

Why not reach out a bit beyond the film which is interesting only to members of the cine-club and their families and friends and develop within your society a more serious film study?

Life in Britain has rarely been touched, as yet, by the camera. A grand selection of subjects lies open to the amateur, alive with freshness, filled with possibilities, revealing for the first time the intimacies of life of farm, factory or home.

Just a few weeks ago there appeared at London cinemas a short film made by a man who was quite new to films. It kept the audience in a stage of giggles from the beginning to its end. It was a simple record of a man getting off to work in the morning from a boarding house. Everything went wrong—in a perfectly natural way. It tickled the men in the audience because it reminded them of their own struggles with a dull razor, or cut chins. It amused the women to see a man in so many small predicaments. It was funny simply because the director knew how to catch and emphasize details—without making them appear staged and affected, and because he filmed something he knew very well.

### Subjects at Hand

All around are subjects. The best ones—probably the ones we find it hardest to see—are those under our very noses. But, whether intimate details or larger impressions they all have their value, if presented in a clear concise manner, with no divergence from a strong central theme.

Some may be simply pictorial representations of a district, town, farm, etc. (shot from one aspect, preferably).

Others may go beneath the skin of the subject a bit—may poke into places and reveal more than the superficial story.

Still others, much more difficult, are made by restaging or snatching sequences from real life and fitting them together into a dramatic story of real people.

It would be well, perhaps, for the beginner in films to start with the descriptive, or pictorial film. These are badly needed by teachers to illustrate geography lessons and may form a background for lectures and entertainments.

From that start, feeling one's way carefully, and giving infinite care to the study of one's subject and preparation of script, may be built a very fine type of documentary, equal on 16 mm. to the professional, full-size film. These films will have lasting value, and great social and educational influence.

From a serious beginning with the simple descriptive film may spring a longer documentary, with a strong theme, complete, perhaps, with sound, filling the bill in thousands of school-halls, non-theatrical shows, clubrooms, and evening classes.

With this in mind, there need be no hesitancy of plan, no lack of room for development.

There are certain things which amateurs, of course, are compelled to consider in making their films (more particularly amateur cine societies). First: the cost. Second: they must use all their members in making the films.

The question of cost may be helped a lot in the future, by sponsorship. It remains to a large extent with the amateurs whether or not the sponsorship can be encouraged to any large extent. The amateurs must produce the goods. They must make films of very high standard. They must get to the bottom of the subjects and root out the interesting and significant details. They must seize upon opportunities for distribution.

The other problem—that of using society members—is really no problem at all (although, it seems, a lot of societies look upon it as a serious obstacle to documentary).

There is no reason why a good sized "cast" might not be used in a documentary—to act parts with which they are, in their work or home-life, perfectly familiar.

The scripts would be written with that in mind, offices, street scenes, working, playing. People shopping—struggling to get on a bus. A family at the seaside or on a motor-car trip into Scotland.

The acting in that case isn't high-powered imitation of something remote from them, but simply the performance of a familiar task, *naturally*. Take, for instance, a film about a motor-trip. A group of people could be used, two or four, or even more. And here one could get beyond the travelogue account of scenery and roads and hotels, to the actual meaning of the holiday—freedom from routine and work, the discovery of a new world—a world they had no notion existed except in a vague sort of way—a wonderful new world opened to them by the purchase of a motor-car.

Or, the seaside,—the South Coast, sunshine, fun, frolic, fresh-air, health and vitality to face more weeks in the city.

The actors there might be one, two, three families, children, parents, grandparents. They meet at the seaside. They arrive white and tired; the children thin—the office girl nervous and worried and overworked; the mother feeling the strain of indoor work and a family; their tempers a bit frayed. Father grumbles a bit and wonders if "it's worth it," all this struggle and bustle and worry to get there with all the children.

The whole wonders of the seaside are opened to them gradually. And all the while the sun and wind and fresh air are making new people of them, until when they go home—and see more people arrive and they overhear someone else say "All this bother and worry . . ."

The whole of the wonders of a fortnight at the sea could thus be shown through the eyes of one family and the friends they make while on holiday. Intimate family incidents, could be staged to build up sequence by sequence a fine story. A dozen or more ways of handling the same theme will come to mind almost at once. Immediately the film maker can think of people who would "do" for the parts.

But delving deeper than the superficial requires careful observation by the film maker—people, animals, nature, all those things which play their part in the film.

### Observation of Detail

Noting what people do under certain circumstances, and what they say, jotting down real life anecdotes and real life impressions is a good habit to form. Observing all the small details of clothing—actions, expressions, so that incidents could be restaged, and complete naturalness obtained. Observation beforehand, standing watching for hours, waiting for things to happen is essential. If you go to a farm in mid-afternoon, you won't see much happening. You'll miss the excitement of all the morning bustle—the ducks to the pond, the cows to the field. If you wait until evening when the horses come in from the field, you will, ten to one, see them shake themselves after the harness is removed and hunt for a good spot in the meadow for their evening roll or walk deep into the pond for a drink.

The main thing is, of course, to film something one knows something about.

Take the seaside story, for instance.

You might know the SEASIDE in general, fairly well, having been to Brighton, Bournemouth, etc. on various occasions. That will be a help for it means a lot of time saved in investigating the superficial, or the surface, material. You know the lay of the land.

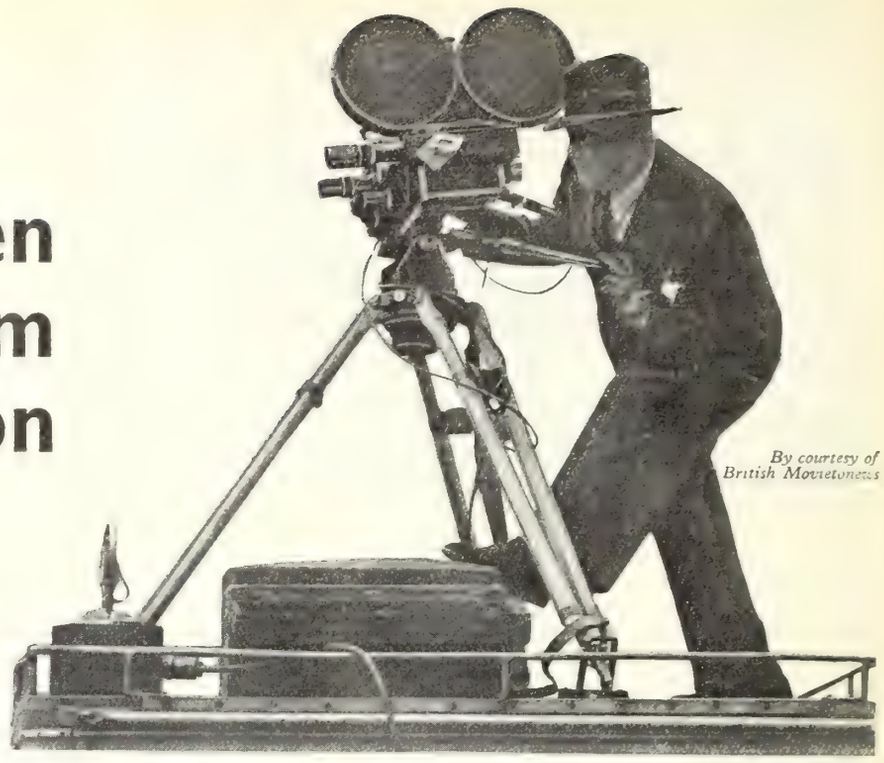
But, if you took complete strangers for your cast, you would need time. You would need to walk about and observe and listen and reckon what kind of people they were—and finally select. You might select wisely and you might not.

Much better to take your cast with you—friends who were interested—or members of the film—who might spend their holiday being filmed. You could then find them parts to play which they could handle—and bring in all your atmosphere and general shots by snatching or staging from the seaside crowds.

The subjects are so thick around us that the difficulty is not finding one, but selecting the best one, most fitted to individial experience and equipment, etc.

Amateurs have nothing to lose and a whole lot to gain: firstly, a possible chance of financial help; secondly, the satisfaction of knowing that their films are serving a good purpose socially and educationally; thirdly the pleasure in the thought that Britain and British people are being screened; fourthly, that very large numbers of people are seeing their films in non-theatrical shows, and fifthly, the hope that the amateur documentary might lead to bigger things for them in professional documentary film-making.

# Famous Cameramen will use Kodak film for their Coronation pictures



*By courtesy of British Movietonews*

For such historic and unrepeatable shots Kodak film is used as a matter of course. It is used, too, year-in, year-out, in the studio and on location. And the film that is used by millions of amateurs is made under the supervision of the same skilled chemists and trained technicians, with the accumulated experience of the unrivalled Kodak organization. Whether you are just taking snapshots during the coming Coronation festivities or have a seat reserved from which to make your own movie record, follow the lead of the ace Cameramen—**use Kodak Film**

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# YOU CANNOT DO BETTER!

# Don't Copy Professionals

## says ANDREW BUCHANAN

### in his eighth article for Amateurs

THOUGH the supply of realistic material is never ending, it is natural that, at some time or other, the independent director will turn his thoughts to fictional production, and although his experience as a documentalist will have made him aware of the fact that Truth is *stronger* than fiction on the screen, he will do no harm to explore the possibilities of producing human stories. The fact that he has few facilities, and no recording outfit will, in some respects, prove an advantage.

In discussing fictional production, one automatically draws interesting parallels between the amateur and professional worlds, and these force one to realise the necessity for the amateur to break away from traditional methods of production. First of all the amateur is compelled to make silent films, and so he is compelled to construct his plot so that the meaning will be conveyed by moving images only. The plot will be utterly dependent upon pictures, being devoid of dialogue. Secondly, there will be no opportunity of disguising a weak or unsuitable story by introducing glittering spectacles, guaranteed to distract an audience from the underlying plot, or lack of it—no crowded cabarets, no bewildering battles, no big scenes entirely unrelated to the story. Those things cost a great deal of money, and demand large studio floors. They are dovetailed into poor narratives, and sometimes into good ones, to add glamour, and increase box-office value. Thirdly, the story must be comparatively simple, with normal characters playing in locations which are easily accessible.

### A stronger position

These facts influence the writing of the script, for the villain cannot be packed off to Mexico, or fall from an Atlantic plane when his presence is not needed. Instead he must have influenza, or travel on the wrong bus. It can be seen, therefore, that the amateur is surrounded by limitations only when his position is compared with the professional. Otherwise not only is he without limitations, but he is in a stronger position. Lack of equipment, limited floor space and money compel him to create pictures which shall depend entirely upon his creative ability for success. Consider, for a moment, some of the items which are an indispensable part of the professional's production scheme, as at present constituted:—

A studio which costs a huge sum of money to keep when idle, and even more when active.

Expensive electrical equipment, and a highly paid technical staff to operate it.

Recording apparatus which costs far more than it should.

Cameras costing many hundreds of pounds, plus cameramen whose salaries are regarded as inadequate if below fifty pounds per week—and assistants to operate for them.

Expensive Art Directors who, with staffs of artists and armies of carpenters and plasterers devise settings, each of which frequently cost more than an intelligent picture can be made for.

Stars whose salaries make one totter.

### Costs

Directors and their assistants, production managers, unit managers, scenario writers, dialogue writers, casting and costume supervisors, plus quantities of other people all assisting each other cost a great deal more than the original scheduled figure. Collectively, they create an enormous machine which operates successfully in Hollywood because the cost of production is recovered, with profit, from markets scattered throughout the world. On the other hand, British studios have attempted to imitate Hollywood's expensive system, and have suffered heavy losses in view of the comparatively small market which will accept their product. Consequently, it is up to the amateur to adopt entirely new methods of picture making, instead of trying to copy British professionals, who have failed by trying to copy Hollywood.

It is important for the amateur to realise that such methods are not necessary, and that successful picture making depends primarily upon the ability of the person or persons responsible, and not upon the quantity of apparatus available. Some of the finest films ever created have cost but a few pounds, whereas some of the worst have cost more than one hundred thousand pounds. However, the object of this chapter is not to attempt to revolutionise professional studios, but to rationalise amateur units, and prevent them copying their extravagant rivals, and I trust the foregoing remarks will, to some extent, have shown the futility of building up vast mechanical systems without first having looked to see if there is any creative ability lurking around.

I have frequently stressed the point that a film, fictional or documentary, should be the work of one creative mind, and, at times, this has been interpreted as meaning that one solitary person should write his story, cast and shoot it, build his sets, pull them down, cut, join, print his titles, and operate the projector at his trade show! Quite ridiculous, you agree. My "One-Mind" policy really demands that the producer-director should be the person who conceived the story, and whose personality should dominate and govern every step in the making of it. Whether or not he turns the camera, arranges the flowers, or joins the strips, is relatively unimportant.

### The manufacturer

The major point is that he must NOT be a non-creative individual who agrees to shoot a story written by someone else, about which he has no interest—who leaves the designing of all the settings to another—who has no working knowledge of cameras, and who never steps into the cutting room. Such a man is a manufacturer and not an artist. Few, if any amateurs are in this unfortunate category, for in most cases, they do the work themselves, but in case they have not done so, they have been warned.

Only on an understanding of these principles should fictional production be approached. Simple and ingenious stories may be worked out containing, say, half a dozen characters capable of being truly interpreted by available talent. A story, based perhaps on the most ordinary incidents, in everyday surroundings, must begin well, gather speed towards a middle crisis, and thereafter rise to a final climax. The first treatment, written in simple prose must be constantly altered until it presents a perfectly flowing narrative, after which it must be transformed into the shooting script. The finest technical language to employ is that which the author-director understands best, whether or not the phrases are accepted by orthodox film-makers. Do not attempt a Chinese melodrama, a Spanish revolution, or a History of Harlem, but keep the story to normal happenings which will give opportunities to reveal the world around you.

The concluding point is the vital one, for it lays down the rule that the director who has trained himself to be an observant documentalist, capable of creating exciting non-fictional films out of the material surrounding him, should not change his method of approach one iota when handling fiction. He should set his tale in the village, the town, the foreign city, or the factory, and portray his location with the same vividity as he would if making a purely interest reel. Into this his fictional characters walk, stalk, or limp, and by his skill he weaves a living tapestry, background and characters merging one into the other.

Strangely enough one of the oldest mottoes applies to this newest of mediums—*Actions Speak Louder than Words*. No sentence expresses so concisely the urgent need for the film-maker to concentrate upon creating moving images which, by the order in which they appear, shall tell the story, strengthened rather than weakened by an absence of dialogue.


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# B. A. S. C.

## Robert Flaherty

and

## John Grierson

**announce**

**the formation of a new amateur group**

## THE BRITISH AMATEUR SERVICES CLUB

- The B.A.S.C. has been created to give professional aid on scripts, camera-work and production to all amateurs making films of a documentary or social character.
- Miss Evelyn Spice (Director of *Weather Forecast* and *Calendar of the Year*), has been appointed organising secretary and chief adviser.
- Andrew Buchanan (creator of Cinemagazine), Paul Rotha (producer and author of *The Film Till Now* and *The Documentary Film*), and Basil Wright (director of *The Song of Ceylon*), have been appointed as additional advisers.
- It is hoped that, through its members, B.A.S.C. will help to raise still further the standard of amateur cinematography and do useful work for the community.
- Membership 2/6 for individuals, 5/- for clubs, on application to Miss Evelyn Spice, Oxford House, 9 Oxford Street, W.1.

**Further important B.A.S.C. news will appear next month.**

Robert Flaherty
John Grierson

# FILM SOCIETY NEWS

**EDINBURGH FILM GUILD:** Hon. Secretary, Douglas A. Donald, 16 Great King Street, Edinburgh, 3.

The feature film of the Society's ninth performance of the season was *The Old King and The Young King*, German film in which Emil Jannings plays Frederick I of Prussia. Hans Steinhoff directed the film, under Nazi auspices, and both Herr Hitler and Herr Goebbels were actively interested in its production. Supporting films included *The Black-headed Gull*, made by Gaumont-British Instructional, directed by Mary Field and photographed by Oliver Pike; *Fortress of Peace*, an account of the history of Mont St. Michel; *The Tortoise and the Hare*, Disney cartoon; and *Adolph Zukor*, an impression of the great producer's association with the cinema industry, including excerpts from his films from 1913 to the present day.

**THE CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY.** The new C.F.S. film regarding Catholic Youth in Industry, is to be called *Great Awakening*. The producer explains that the intention is to create interest in England for a movement similar to the J.C.C. (Jeunesse Cuviere Chrétienne, which means Christian Working Youth) in Belgium, adapted, of course, to national temperament and requirements. Sound is introduced into *Great Awakening* by a chorus which intones parts of the Pope's Encyclical, "Rerum Novarum" as a sound background for a series of impressionistic shots of various aspects of industrial life.

Kensington Town Hall display, on April 13th, concluded this year's town hall shows. Lewisham, Finsbury, Battersea, Ilford and Kensington Town Halls have all been visited with a programme of Catholic films the main features of which were *The Holy Mass*, *Aran of the Saints* and *Mount Melloray*.

The next display will be on Wednesday evening, May 5th, at Millicent Fawcett Hall, Tufton Street, Westminster, S.W.1. Tickets, 1*s.* and 1*s.* 6*d.* may be had from the Hon. Asst. Secretary, 36 Great Smith Street, S.W.1.

**FILM SOCIETY OF GLASGOW:** Hon. Secretary, D. Paterson Walker, 127 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, C.2.

An extra meeting was held at the end of this season on April 4th, when the programme consisted of the two most successful Continental films shown publicly in Glasgow for several years: *The Slump is Over*, a picture made in the René Clair tradition by Robert Siodmak; and *Maskerade*, starring and directed by Willy Forst.

This season has been one of the Society's most successful ones, and the membership has risen almost to 1,000, making it the largest Society in the British Isles. Foreign films shown to members during the season included *M.*, *Bonne Chance*, *The Student of Prague*, *Merlusse*, *Marchand d'Armour*, *Die Ewige Maske*, *Music in the Blood*, *Savoy Hotel* 217, and *The Old King and The Young King*. Short films which proved themselves most popular were *Mont St. Michel*, *Gentlemen in Top Hats*, *Night Mail*, *The Broken Jug*, *Enough to Eat?*, *And So to Work*, *On Parade*, *How to Sleep*, *Krakatoa*, *The Band Concert*, *Black Magic*, *Rainbow Dance*, *Dinner Hour*, *Three Orphan Kittens*, and *Cannonball Express*. A repertory season has been started, and the following films have been shown: *State Fair*, *Twentieth Century*, *Zoo in Budapest*, *Berkeley Square*, *Once in a Lifetime*.

On Sunday, April 11th, Mr. Paul Rotha addressed members and showed three films: *Cover to Cover*, *The Way to the Sea*, and *People in the Park*.

**TYNESIDE FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, M. C. Pottinger, Esq., c/o Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1.

The Society has had a successful Spring Session, and has ended with a record membership. Five exhibitions were held in the Haymarket Theatre, Newcastle-on-Tyne, at which the following films were shown. January 24th: *Merlusse*, *Monty Meets Disaster* (made by Arthur G. Greaves, of Montagu Amateur Pictures, and believed to be the first puppet cartoon to be made by an amateur in England), *The Day Thou Gavest* (scenario and direction by Ernest Dyer, photographed by Arthur G. Greaves), *Early Newsreels* 1900-1905, *Our Daily Bread*, and *Carmen*. February 14th: *Fredlös*, *The Mine*, *The Red Army*, and *L'Hippocampe*. March 7th: *Die Ewige Maske*, *Gentlemen in Top Hats*, *The Saving of Bill Blewitt*, *Le Vieux Château*, and *O'er Hill and Dale*. March 21st: *Marchand d'Armour*, *The Development of English Railways*, *The Equation* $\ddot{X}+X=O$, *The March of Time*, *'Alt, Oo Goes Theer?*, and *Nursery Island*. As a result of the increase in membership this Session, it was possible to arrange a fifth exhibition on February 21st of films of special interest to keen students of the cinema. The programme consisted of *L'Atalante*, *Song of Ceylon*, *Night on the Bare Mountain*, and *Thru' the Mirror*. Mr. Basil Wright introduced *L'Alatante*, and afterwards discussed it with members. The Society was also addressed by Mr. John Grierson during the Session.

> Secretaries of Film Societies are asked to send news of their activities; copy to reach the Editor by the eighth of each month.

This summer another pioneer exhibition is planned—of the work of costume designers. M. René Hubert has promised to lend his original sketches for costumes in *Things to Come*, *Fire Over England*, *Under the Red Robe*, and other films, and it is hoped that other leading designers will be represented. The exhibition will take place in the Hatton Gallery, by permission of Professor Mainds, during the period May 20th to May 28th.

**WEST ESSEX FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, F. J. Philpott, 7 Wellington Road, East Ham, E.6.

The Society has now been accepted into the Kine Federation of the Royal Photographic Society. Mr. S. Reed is the representative of the W.E.F.S. on the Kine Federation Committee and is also a nominee for the Committee of the Photographic Alliance of Great Britain, with which the Kine Federation has been allied. The Society hopes to meet in the Federation some of its old friends in other Societies.

**OXFORD FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, E. F. Bowtell, 105 Victoria Road, Oxford.

The Society is holding a short summer season at the Scala Cinema, and meetings will be held on Sundays May 2nd, 23rd and June 6th. All enquiries should be sent to the Hon. Secretary.

**LONDON FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Miss Olwen Vaughan, 4 Great Russell Street, W.C.1.

On the 15th March the Society presented a sub-standard version of the Czecho-Slovakian film *Hey Rup*, a documentary film and one of the prize-winning films at the 1937 Scottish Amateur Film Festival, *The Presentation of the Colours* in Kodachrome by J. E. Davies of Sudbury. This meeting was held at Denison House. The next sub-standard show will be on May 4th, when further prize-winning films from the Scottish Amateur Film Festival will be shown.

The main film at the Society's fifth Sunday film Show, held on April 4th at the Forum, Villiers Street, was *L'Ordonnance*, directed by Tourjansky. This was supported by Harold Lowenstein's film *Out to Play*, the new G.P.O. film *Message from Geneva*, the new G.B.I. film *Changes in the Franchise* and an old American comedy *His Phantom Sweetheart*.

On Tuesday, April 6th the Society showed at Film House, Wardour Street, *The Land of Promise*, a five-reel documentary film on the re-settlement of Palestine by the Jews, produced by the Urim Palestine Film Company.

**THE IRISH FILM SOCIETY** was founded last November and represents an offshoot of the Dublin Little Theatre Guild which has shown its members such famous films as *Caligari*, *Potemkin*, *The Italian Straw Hat*, *Pitz Palu* and *The Prisoner's Song*. Owing to the fact that in Ireland little is known of the artistic and cultural potentialities of film much pioneer propaganda needs to be done. In the ordinary cinemas none of the artistic products of European Studios have been shown if one excepts a stray import like *Kameradschaft* and *Le Million*.

In the first year of existence the Society, hampered by a small membership, depends on the rather unsatisfactory sub-standard type of programme. With its second season it hopes to achieve showings of Continental talkies in regular cinemas and an extended drive to make Dublin film-conscious, after that it is hoped that interest may be developed in other centres.

For its first meeting after Easter a paper will be read on "The position of the Cinema in Ireland" following which there will be a discussion representative of many points of view. The Season will close with a showing of *Mother* or *Metropolis*.

When any outstanding film comes along, members are asked to support it. So far this recommendation has only been extended to *Modern Times* and *Fury* which is the most eloquent indication of the need for the Society.

The Directors of the Society are: Ed. Toner, P. J. Fitzsimons, Liam O'Laoghaire, Sean O'Meadhra. All communications should be addressed to: 41 South Circular Road, Portobello, Dublin.

# TECHNICAL

## Comparing Sound Projectors

During the past month, I have seen two 16 mm. Sound projectors and one 35 mm. portable outfit, all interesting outfits, worthy of the consideration of prospective mechanics. The G.B. model "B" is unique for its silent running and good performance, providing ample screen illumination for throws up to 50 feet, a really remarkable efficiency for a 200 watt lamp. The picture is steady and sound quite good. It is a light weight and therefore not made for continuous projection duty. One criticism, however, is that I found it necessary to run it in for some 10 minutes prior to projecting a film. Otherwise the machine laboured and correct speed was unobtainable. Another important point is that unless the projector and sound gate are kept scrupulously clean, there is evident danger of serious film scratching.

The G.B. "D" model which incorporates the Siemens lighting and optical system is a superior offering and has obviously more refinement. The performance of sound and picture is very good, though I have heard better in the reproduction of music. The machine is of open-type construction and inclined to be rather noisy, but placed in a fairly large auditorium for which it is intended this noise should not prove distracting. The screen illumination is good, and there is adequate sound without distortion for use in large halls. But I would ask G.B. "Why only 800 ft. rolls?" and "Why still D.I.N.?"

Messrs. Kershaws of Leeds have provided an interesting 35 mm. portable—but not so portable as compared with, for instance, the Gaumont "N" type, or the Phillips 35 mm. However, the set was also designed for small cinemas for use with either cartoon arc or cold light illumination. Sound and picture quite good, a really robust job made by a firm with a big trade backing extending over a number of years. Have a good look at this and give it your careful consideration.

## *How Long Will it Last?*

That is the question all prospective sub-standard users wish to be answered. It is a very vital question, one for which no definite answer has yet been given.

Experience with safety (acetate) stock which is available for sub-standard work, undoubtedly is that it should last a lifetime if given reasonably good storage and care.

Capt. Bradley of the United States Archives and Society of Motion Picture Engineers Committee on film preservation, after exhaustive work on the problem, announces that safety film lasts much longer than nitrate film, and that with ideal storage should last 500 years.

Hence in 500 years time, who knows? we might be brought back to life as prehistoric monstrosities. That is—if our descendants will observe the necessity of storing the films at 50° F. and 50 per cent. humidity for all time.

**D. R.**

## Sensitivity

Kodak's sensitivity rating is based on an arbitrary figure of 100 giving the following speed figures for the four types of Kodak black and white reversal films:

| | |
|---|---|
| 8 mm. Cine Kodak film | 80% |
| 16 mm. Safety Film | 120% |
| Regular Panchromatic | 160% |
| Super-sensitive Pan. | 240% |

By a stroke of luck, we can, by knocking off the 0 in the above ratings obtain the Weston exposure meter ratings, which is a valuable hint.

Kodak have evolved three types of panchromatic product known as A, B, and C. Type A, the earliest, is featured by a low Red sensitivity rating. At present the only one of this type available is 16 mm. panchromatic reversal film for cine work.

Type C, emulsion with a higher red sensitivity, is available in C-K 8 mm. film, Kodak Safety Film, and Supersensitive.

Again these ratings have important bearing on filtering, for C type emulsions require no increase in exposure, with yellow filters K-2 and C-K 2. With Type A, these films have a factor of 2, and the factor for the Orange Q filter is from 3—4½ with A emulsions and only 2½ with type C. The Red 23A filter has a factor of 7 with A emulsions and only 3½ with C emulsions.

As pointed out last month there are only 4 proper uses of the haze filter when shooting Kodachrome. 1, to absorb excess of ultra violet, encountered at high altitudes. 2, to reduce the tendency toward bluish shadows in snow scenes. 3, to curb a tendency toward a bluish cast on overcast hazy days and 4, to curtail the bluish haze on extremely distant long shots. The latter as I explained last month is only a personal preference and must not be taken for granted every time.

With Type A Kodachrome, for use in artificial light, do not leave a partly exposed film in the camera. The latent image deteriorates and the emulsion is likely to stick in the aperture.

The Weston meter rating for this particular film is 8, or 80% on the sensitivity scale and if you must shoot scenes outdoors on this film, say to use up the reel, don't forget to use a proper Type A daylight filter.

## Lighting for Colour

Many amateurs fail when shooting Semi-Silhouettes in colour due to the over-lighting of the foreground. "Contre-jour" effects are very striking in colour when people are shown against a strongly illuminated background, with just enough front lighting falling on their figures to avoid a fully silhouetted effect. Here a word of warning: when progressing from long-shots to close-shots it is necessary to use more front light the closer you "track in." Not only for technical reasons, but because in close-shots the audience now expect to see the facial reactions of the players. To reveal their fleeting expressions, strong front lighting is needed, a case of cause and effect.

In cine artificial lighting, it is always a good plan for best results, to concentrate the illumination more on the face than on the figure. Maybe the face is not always the attraction, as it is when photographing a beautiful woman, but it should be made the focal point of the audience's attention.

When shooting close-ups of the face, and the scene is dramatic, diffusing down will produce greater dramatisation particularly if the background light is in a low key, thus bringing the face into greater relief. The surest way to draw attention to any object is to make it the central lighting point in your lighting scheme.

Arrange the lighting to make the eyes the most dominant feature. If you observe close-ups on the cinema screen, you will always find this point carried out with great care. The eyes are strongly illuminated, then the light falls rapidly off the rest of the face. Often if there is good reason, strong shadows are cast across the face. These in colour are particularly effective—but don't forget the eyes.

While women usually require relatively soft lighting, men call for more vigorous, contrasting treatment. Colour assists powerfully with a strong face, one that expresses character, in making the face dominate the composition. But be vigorous, letting the background lighting fall off into black velvety shadows. In this way good pictorial, as well as dramatic, results are obtained that give life to the picture.

Key lighting is very necessary with colour, a main light source from one side or the other. Follow logically the light that would normally fall on the figure. If from say a bracket lamp, key light from the direction of this bracket and all will be well—other cases to suit the points of the setting.

From the key light, model the face according to the dramatic element required, and don't forget that upward light from a point directly below the camera, and a high light supplied from a photoflood held in the hand, then moved about to follow the head movement, are old and well-tried tricks that give greater punch to close-up work generally. This applies, incidentally, to black and white as well as colour.

## Whirling Camera Effect

This trick employed in the *Man Who Could Work Miracles* caused a sensation. You may remember the point when Roland Young tells the world to stand still and later we find him soaring in space with everything revolving around him. An amazingly effective trick. The trick is simple for the only thing required is a method of revolving the camera around its own optical axis. Usually, in the studios a wooden wheel is used with the centre cut out to accommodate the camera. This is revolved by means of a friction roller or gear, operated by turning a handle by hand. Naturally the wheel needs to be well made for it may be necessary to fix the whole apparatus horizontal for "drop-shots."

To shoot the scene, light in the normal manner, check by an exposure meter set the camera to run at 64 frames per second, line up very accurately, then revolve the camera shooting as much footage as required, and there you are. Not very difficult but on the screen quite sensational.

★If any reader has a particular trick shot he is itching to do yet cannot, due to lack of knowledge, drop me a line and I will do my best to explain how.

*H. Chevalier*

# LETTERS

## "Malingering or Sick?"

It is part of the duty of a film producer strictly to include in his manifold duties careful and regular scrutiny of all that is written about films and film production—and the writings of film critics in particular, because they are, as it were, on a watch tower: detached (they should be), with the whole changing scene of films and film production away from them, and seen in its true perspective.

So it came to pass, a Sunday or two ago I was reading an article in *The Observer* headed, "Malingering or Sick?" As I read on, it seemed to me that I remembered very similar phrases in a previous article, in the same paper and by the same writer, but in the absolutely opposite sense.

In the hope that you may enable me and others to interpret these writings to the general benefit of the English film industry, I attach the appropriate extracts from the two articles, the one from *The Observer* of March 21st, 1937, and the other from the issue of Jan 17th, 1937.

For Associated British Picture Corporation Ltd.
WALTER C. MYCROFT, *Director of Production.*

Extract from *The Observer*, Sunday, 17th January, 1937.

". . . . Rumours of bankruptcy and panic grew. Balance-sheets that should never have been seen outside a board-room were published without any clear explanation of their figures.

"By the end of the week it was as widely accepted that the British film industry was on the verge of disaster as it was held during the War that Russian troops had passed through England with snow on their boots.

"It is time that this absurd rumour should be shown up at once as *the mare's nest it is*. The city, preparing, after careful investigation, to entrust more money than ever in the future to the reputable film companies, is sitting back and laughing at us. But the producers are not laughing.

". . . . What is the truth about the present situation? *The truth is that there is no production crisis in the industry*. There have been no important losses, in spite of certain figures that have been published. There has been vast expenditure, certainly, but not necessarily, in the long run, extravagant expenditure.

". . . . It is to be hoped that within the next few days the panic will have died down, and the film industry, instead of engaging in a furious game of attack and defence, will be allowed to settle down to its proper job of making pictures. In the meantime one clear fact emerges from the whole situation. It is the Press and the public, and *not the producers*, who have been busily stampeding the industry towards disaster.

". . . . If we panic the producers now into acting against their own experience, if we send them back uniformly to make cheap pictures simply because we have not the courage to trust in a business man's longer vision, we shall be undoing the patient work of five years in the British film industry. There is not much that we, the picture-going public, can do for the political economy of the cinema, but *there are two things we can refrain from doing—panicking and meddling*. If we will allow *the British producers to look after themselves* in the way that seems best to them, there is every chance that this week's experience may lead to saner finance and better organisation, and that a temporary loss may be turned into a permanent gain . . . ."

Extract from *The Observer*, Sunday, 21st March, 1937.

"*Malingering or Sick?*"

"In spite of all the denials issued by producers and financiers a *few weeks ago*, there is no longer any question about it; *there is a severe crisis indeed in the British film industry*.

". . . . As long as there was any chance of preserving confidence by silence, those of us who have been watching these symptoms with *growing uneasiness* waited; hoping for signs of recovery. Now we have got to the point when silence is only an added proof of suspicion. *We must face the truth. The British film is in the grips of crisis.* Only by accepting that fact can we get the confidence to meet it. The cause of disaster was mainly *inside the studios*, but the cure may have to come from powers *outside them*. The cure is now the urgent thing; not the how or why.

". . . . If we have to tear out the whole existing fabric of our studio world and begin again, it is worth the sacrifice to build up a sane and solid industry. If there are weaklings at the head of the studios, they must be replaced. If there is waste in expenditure, it has got to be checked. We must bring in fresh blood, young blood, even if it means letting old blood. There was never a grievous hurt cured yet without pain . . . ."

(*Mr. Mycroft's Italics*)

## Kings for a Day

(*article in March issue*)

Mr. Gade's complaint against my article seems to be that I wrote of the interesting and amusing few rather than the many whose lives are a chronicle of disappointment, disillusionment and hunger.

I know that there are not merely five, but nearer ten thousand extras daily tramping from agent to agent in the vain hope of a call, and so much do I know of the heartbreak of it all that I employ whatever eloquence I have to dissuade unsuitable newcomers from joining the unhappy ranks—usually without success.

I hear of a girl fainting on an agent's stairs because she has not had a meal for three days. Another one tells me she has had only two days work in six weeks, yet when I suggest that there are thousands of homes where these girls would be welcomed as one of the family, fed and housed in comfortable surroundings and paid far better wages than the meagre pittance they wring from the film industry, I am regarded as an inhuman monster.

They call this ambition, but of what use is ambition without ability? And how few have ability is proved by the many unfortunate experiences of directors when trying to find talent amongst their crowds. In Hollywood, where—we are told—they do things better, only thirteen extras have arisen to stardom since the Central Casting Bureau began compiling records; and only one has achieved this distinction since the advent of talkies.

One reason for this is given (unconsciously I imagine) by Mr. Gade himself in an illuminating sentence: "The thing that is of paramount importance to any film-extra *worthy* of the name is the guinea a day." The italics are mine. This is half the trouble with the film industry; too many of the extras are more concerned with the *getting* of the guinea than the *earning* of it. If the thing of paramount importance to them were the conscientious performance of their job, there would be far more part-players and even stars recruited from the crowds.

DOROTHY [illegible]

## This "highbrow" business

Mr. Flanagan,* in his letter of good wishes in *W.F.N.* No. 12, can give you no greater praise than to say that you drink beer, can recognize the smell of amyl acetate (you are not required to give the formula), march in step with your elders, and are not highbrows. In fact, you are, with the exception of the penultimate virtue, awfully like Mr. Flanagan himself. I disagree with all but the first two of these libels, and even on the second I could catch you out unless you happen to be chemists.

But as to this "highbrow" business; it should be put with the other social myths like the-Irishman-with-the-pig-under-the-bed. According to Mr. Flanagan a highbrow is . . . "A dilettante fraud who prates of montage and tempo, to whom a director is *a regie* and a movieola a new depilatory" . . . "Academic theorists" . . . and the rest of the old defensive reflex. In this he shows a good working ignorance of his own job. Let him look through the files of the "highbrow" papers, and make a list of the names of the more prominent dilettante frauds of the last ten years. Then compare this list with the more outstanding names in the text and advertisement pages of *W.F.N.* For instance, is Len Lye a fraud? If he is not, when did he cease to be one? If he has never been a fraud, how is it that the Street let the highbrows discover him?

A byproduct of this activity will be the discovery of some practical hints on the use of colour and sound; highbrows generally manage to be about five years ahead of Wardour St. Of course I shouldn't mention montage, because Mr. Flanagan can stand it only when it is called something else. That's why they didn't use it for some years after the highbrows and Hollywood. Whatever you call it, the fact of montage exists, and the word itself, in all its obscene horror, appeared on a credit title of *San Francisco* the other day.

As for this confusion between movieolas and depilatories, it is not so serious as a confusion between debits and assets. Even on this point I defy Mr. Flanagan. The trouble with highbrows is not that they are ignorant of the mechanics of film production, but that they are over-interested in it. If Mr. Flanagan means what he says, he would make every cinemagoer pass an entrance examination in film technics as well as the box-office. If he got his wish many highbrows, including perhaps myself, would be seated before he was.

ROBERT FAIRTHORNE

**It seems an ungracious act on the part of W.F.N. to bite the hand that feeds it, but Aubrey Flanagan is also a journalist.*

# Letters (cont.)

## The Pope and Robert Herring

For the benefit of your readers, who may have read neither my original article in *Sight and Sound*, September 1936, nor an interview with Mr. Leslie in the *Catholic Herald*, February 1937, may I state that my observations were not entirely as Mr. Leslie quotes them? The gist of the article (it was called "Religion and the Screen" and by no means wholly concerned with the Papacy) was that I considered the churches are louder in blame than in praise. This is borne out by the contrast to the approving passage from the Encyclical, quoted by Mr. Leslie, and this, from the same source—

> "*the more marvellous the progress of the motion picture art and industry, the more pernicious and deadly has it shown itself to morality and to religion and even to the very decencies of human society.*"

I think I am justified in considering that the phrasing of the approving passages "is less vigorous than that of the denunciatory passages."

Mr. Leslie states that my "implication that the Pope envisaged only evil and subversive films is demonstrably unfair," my "implication" was that "that Church of which Pope Pius 11th, is spokesman seems however, to be more worried by the bad than aware of the good." Further, I am alleged to have said that I could "the more readily stomach the difficulties put in the way of *Saint Joan* and *Green Pastures* if I knew what encouragement they had received from Rome." My actual words were—

> "*Let me know what encouragement was given to the production and exhibition of such works as 'Kameradschaft,' 'La Maternelle,' 'Pasteur,' and even 'Mr. Deeds,' and I can the more readily stomach the difficulties put in the way of 'St. Joan' and 'Green Pastures.'*"

Mr. Leslie may read more quickly than he writes, as he seems to have missed so many of the key words in my article. But I should be glad if you would allow me to safeguard my own status as a journalist by removing the misapprehensions liable to be caused by his method of quotation by selected omission. Finally, whilst appreciative of his care for critics' digestion, may I suggest that before recommending a diet of History and Literature Mr. Leslie would have done well to acquaint himself with the fact that the person he was chiefly addressing has for two years run a literary Review, edited five 18th century plays for Messrs. Macmillan and has the right to subscribe himself,

ROBERT HERRING, M.A. (Honours History and English, King's College, Cambridge, 1924).

## Psychology Today

In my note on Cambridge films last month, I made rude reference to the commentary of *Psychology Today*. Mr. Reynolds, the commentator in question, explains that though he both spoke the commentary (which he agrees is bad) and put up £30, the two things have nothing to do with each other. Indeed the £30 saved the unit's finances, and Mr. Reynolds' action, he assures me, was disinterested. I accept his statement in good faith and take this opportunity of correcting my mistake.

More important is the fact that there are two units, one called *The Cambridge University Film Production Unit*, to whom my remarks of last month should apply, and *Cambridge Film Productions*, a semi-professional unit operating mostly in London. Any journalist may be forgiven the error and we hope that the childish squabble which is going on as to who has right to the word "*Cambridge*" will soon be settled. This kind of thing only brings harm to the movement.

My own award goes to the *Cambridge University Film Production Unit* actually operating in Cambridge, and I hope that *Cambridge Film Productions* operating in London will change their name.

ARTHUR ELTON

## Housing Propaganda by film

In planning modern housing schemes, architects are often compelled to sacrifice their best ideas when they consider the use (or misuse) that is likely to be made of the property in question by its future tenants.

Those who lack the sense of social amenity and appreciation of surroundings are holding up the progress that might be made in housing scheme architecture.

The propaganda film offers a more likely solution to the problem than the "Forbidden" notices it is customary to post on buildings.

Suitable films would be of undoubted value in interesting the great masses of people who would otherwise never consider the possibilities and menaces of Town Planning.

They might conceivably be brought to realise through time, that their own personal behaviour bears a definite relation to the amenity of their surroundings.

As, for example, the present necessity for depressing railings and enclosures to protect any public building or cultivated open space from the deplorable destructive tendencies of the younger members of lower class communities.

Any such corrective measures would naturally have to be tactfully administered, and the films given some entertainment value through human interest and a quiet appeal to the sense of humour—such as a series of short films depicting the adventures and reactions of some family typical of those likely to witness the films.

In view of the fact that cultivated areas can exist in certain other countries without railings—and without abuse, one feels that it cannot be impossible to achieve a similar state of affairs here.

RONA H. INCH MORRISON

## History of the Movies

In reference to my article on the history of the movies published in April, I should like to correct a printer's error. The first American motion picture company bore the name of Edison and built a studio; but Edison himself was not, I believe, connected with it. Since writing the article, I have found that Professor Loshki (referred to in my article) turns out to be none other than Starevitch, who worked under this name for his early pictures. The models he used were made with the bodies of dead beetles reinforced with wire and other suitable materials.

MARIE SETON

# *Technical*

I have read with interest the technical notes on lighting for colour films by H. Chevalier in the April issue of *W.F.N.* Whilst the information given is extremely interesting, I think the point to remember is that the average amateur does not use artificial light when using Kodachrome owing to the high cost and is therefore, forced to rely on daylight.

When using Kodachrome in daylight, it is inadvisable to use anything but flat lighting as it is difficult to balance up the shadows. In any shot on Kodachrome where there are heavy shadows, I have found that they have a definite tendency of blue which, of course, produces an incorrect colour rendering over the whole.

With regard to editing colour films, I recently was concerned in making a short film in which the different reels were processed at different times, the result being that each roll had a different colour rendering and this, as you can imagine, caused an unhappy result on the screen. I would, therefore, strongly recommend that all rolls in the same film should be processed at the same time and not only all scenes in one sequence, in order to produce an even tone throughout the film.

The introduction of technical notes in *W.F.N.* is, I think, a good feature and should be appreciated by readers.

J. MASTERTON

## Sound Projection

While endorsing most of Mr. Dave Robson's advice on the choice of a sound projector I think that some of his remarks need qualification and his reference to sound reproduction should be amplified.

Your contributor states that the final test of any sound reproducer lies in its ability to play back on film a constant note without a waver in the sound over a period of minutes. In my opinion equally important is its ability to handle a range of frequencies permitting reasonably faithful reproduction of both music and speech. If the salesman is unable to demonstrate constant frequency (film) recordings up to 7,000 or 8,000 cycles (16 mm) then the purchaser should ask to hear speech in which the "hiss" of the sibilants is reproduced. The optical system and photocell amplifier may be incapable of reproducing these high frequencies and to buy such apparatus would result in as great embarrassment as the purchase of a D.I.N. projector.

The demonstration should obviously take place under normal conditions in the hall where the projector is to be installed.

A direct coupled take-up drive is not necessarily above reproach. If belts "are not so reliable and are likely to give trouble" I do not think some of the best makers would adhere to this form of drive.

In my experience the efficiency of a well designed belt drive is easily maintained and a big point in its favour is this: if trouble develops the cause and remedy can be spotted immediately usually either the belt is slack or there is oil on it and the pulleys.

R. COLWYN WOOD,
*Proprietor: Sound and Film Services*

# FILM GUIDE

## *Shorts*

**Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves** (Puppets in Gaspar-color).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Slatinay and George Pal

AIRDRIE: Coliseum — May 3, 3 days
CAERNARVON: Empire — May 17, 6 days
COLLYHURST: Palace — May 17, 6 days
GRANGEMOUTH: La Scala — May 28, 2 days
LEITH: Palace — May 6, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Prince of Wales — May 6, 3 days
LONDON: World News, Praed Street — May 27, 4 days
MANCHESTER: New Central, Pendleton — May 3, 6 days
Rivoli, Rusholme — May 24, 6 days
NEWSHAM: Plaza — May 17, 2 days
NORTH SHIELDS: Gaiety — May 13, 2 days
SALTCOATS: Regal — May 27, 3 days
SELBY: Central — May 3, 2 days
SILSDEN: Picture House — May 6, 3 days
THIRSK: Regent — May 24, 4 days

**Birthplace of America** (British origins of American pioneers).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* A. Moncrieff Davidson

ALLOA: Pavilion — May 3, 3 days
BEVERLEY: Marble Arch — May 3, 3 days
BOLTON: Crompton Way — May 17, 3 days
CLAYTON: Carlton — May 3, 3 days
GORTON: New Central — May 24, 3 days
Rivoli — May 27, 3 days
HILLSBOROUGH: Phoenix — May 3, 3 days
LEICESTER: Trocadero — May 13, 3 days
PRESCOT: Lyme House — May 13, 3 days
WHITWORTH: Royal Pavilion — May 24, 2 days

**Cable Ship** (Documentary of the G.P.O. Cable Ships at work in the Channel).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
*DIRECTION:* Stuart Legg

FILEY: Grand — May 20, 3 days
GRASSINGTON: Cinema — May 13, 1 day
HOLYHEAD: Hippodrome — May 31, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Park — May 27, 3 days
PATELEY BRIDGE: Cinema — May 14, 1 day

**Coal Face** (Poetic treatment of coal-mining).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
*SOUND PRODUCTION:* Alberto Cavalcanti

LIVERPOOL: Coliseum, Wallasey — May 27, 3 days
LONDON: Empress, Islington — May 24, 3 days
STOCKPORT: Don — May 20, 3 days

**Cover to Cover** (Documentary of Book production).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Alexander Shaw

BERWICK: Playhouse — May 17, 3 days
BIRMINGHAM: Kingston, Small Heath — May 10, 6 days
BOURNEMOUTH: Premier News — May 3, 3 days
BRADFORD: Theatre Royal — May 3, 6 days
CHESTER: Tatler — May 3, 6 days
GRANTHAM: Picture House — May 31, 3 days
HULL: Londesborough — May 27, 3 days
ILKESTON: King's — May 6, 3 days
ILKLEY: New — May 10, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Grand — May 10, 3 days
LONDON: Empresss, Islington — May 3, 3 days
MANCHESTER: York, Hulme — May 25, 4 days
MATLOCK: Cinema House — May 31, 3 days
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: Savoy — May 10, 3 days
ROCHDALE: Coliseum — May 3, 3 days
Salon — May 6, 3 days
SHEFFIELD: Pavilion — May 20, 3 days
STOCKPORT: Don — May 17, 3 days
WILMSLOW: Rex — May 27, 3 days
WINDERMERE: Cinema — May 13, 3 days
WORKINGTON: Empire — May 24, 3 days

**Enough to Eat?** ("The Nutrition Film").
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* The Gas, Light and Coke, Co.
*DIRECTION:* Edgar Anstey

BANGOR: County — May 24, 6 days
BRIDLINGTON: Lounge — May 24, 3 days
FALKIRK: Pavilion — May 6, 3 days
GLASGOW: Picture House, Sauchiehall Street — May 10, 6 days
LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Rd. — May 31, 7 days
NORTHWICH: Plaza — May 17, 3 days
WALLASEY: Gaumont Palace, Egremont — May 3, 6 days

### *Coronation Films*

**Crown and Glory**
*DISTRIBUTION and PRODUCTION:* Paramount
*DIRECTION:* G. T. Cummins

**The House of Windsor**
*DISTRIBUTION and PRODUCTION:* Pathé
*DIRECTION:* F. Watts
*COMPILED BY* Commander Stephen King-Hall

**The King's People**
*DISTRIBUTION and PRODUCTION:* Warner Bros.
*DIRECTION:* John Stumar
*SCRIPT:* John Drinkwater
*INTRODUCING:* Lady Astor
George Bernard Shaw
John Drinkwater
Mary Clare
Violet Loraine

**Our Royal Heritage**
*DISTRIBUTION:* Butcher's Film Service
*PRODUCTION:* *News of the World*, on behalf of King George V Playing Fields Fund
*DIRECTION:* Widgey Newman
*COMMENTARY:* Stuart Hibberd, B.B.C. Head Announcer

*All these films are released during May. Bookings for all of them are not available at the time of going to press.*

**Fire Fighters** (Documentary of the London Fire Brigade).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Peter Collin

ALTRINCHAM: Regal — May 6, 3 days
GOOLE: Cinema Palace — May 6, 3 days
HULL: National — May 13, 3 days
LONDON: Sphere, Tottenham Court Road — May 27, 3 days
SHEFFIELD: Globe, Attercliffe — May 19, 4 days
SUTTON COLDFIELD: Odeon — May 17, 6 days

**Fishing on the Banks of Skye**
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit

BOLLINGTON: Empire — May 27, 3 days
EASTBOURNE: Winter Gardens — May 31, 3 days
HOLYHEAD: Hippodrome — May 31, 3 days
LONDON: Empress, Islington — May 24, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Kings, Wallasey — May 3, 3 days
SWINDON: Arcadia — May 24, 6 days
TOWYN: Cinema — May 24, 3 days

**How to Behave** (A skit on etiquette in the typical Benchley manner).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Robert Benchley

MANCHESTER: Tatler, Oxford Street — May 10, 6 days

**Islands of the Bounty** (Islands associated with the famous mutiny).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.

BARNSLEY: Pavilion — May 17, 6 days
BERWICK: Playhouse — May 17, 3 days
BOLLINGTON: Empire — May 27, 3 days
DUMBARTON: Rialto — May 20, 3 days
DUMFRIES: Regal — May 6, 3 days
FARNWORTH: Empire — May 17, 3 days
GLASGOW: Picture House, Dennistoun — May 13, 3 days
ILKLEY: New — May 24, 3 days
KNARESBOROUGH: Cinema — May 6, 3 days
LONDON: Empress, Islington — May 24, 3 days
LONDONDERRY: Opera House — May 17, 3 days
MANCHESTER: Rivoli, Rusholme — May 24, 6 days
Scala, Withington — May 20, 3 days
MATLOCK: Cinema House — May 31, 3 days
NORTH SHIELDS: Gaiety — May 13, 3 days
PORTMADOC: Coliseum — May 10, 3 days
STOCKPORT: Alexandra — May 10, 6 days
Don — May 24, 3 days
WHITEHAVEN: Queens — May 17, 3 days
WINDERMERE: Cinema — May 31, 3 days
WORKINGTON: Oxford — May 13, 3 days

**Key to Scotland** (Documentary of Edinburgh).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson

DARLINGTON: Alhambra — May 17, 3 days
FLEETWOOD: Pier Pavilion — May 30, 4 days
GOOLE: Cinema Palace — May 3, 3 days
HULL: Playhouse — May 20, 3 days
West Park — May 27, 3 days
Savoy — May 6, 3 days
LONDON: Monseigneur, Piccadilly — May 3, 3 days
Sphere, Tottenham Court Road — May 20, 3 days
MONMOUTH: Picture House — May 13, 3 days
MONTROSE: Kings — May 24, 3 days
NORTHWICH: Plaza — May 3, 3 days
RUNCORN: Empress — May 3, 3 days
STIRLING: Regal — May 24, 6 days

**Gentlemen in Top Hats and Gentlemen in Crowns** (Historical survey of European affairs for the past 40 years).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* A. B. Svensk Filmindustri
*ENGLISH VERSION:* Donald Taylor

ABERDEEN: Topical News — May 10, 6 days
BIRMINGHAM: Odeon, Blackheath — May 13, 3 days
Odeon, Perry Bar — May 6, 3 days
BISHOPS STORTFORD: Regent — May 31, 3 days
DERBY: Odeon — May 3, 6 days
HANLEY: Odeon — May 10, 6 days
HINCKLEY: Regent — May 3, 3 days
KINGSTANDING: Odeon — May 13, 3 days
LOUGHBOROUGH: Odeon — May 17, 3 days
MALVERN: Theatre — May 10, 6 days
OXFORD: Scala — May 17, 3 days
STAFFORD: Odeon — May 20, 3 days
SUNDERLAND: Palace — May 10, 6 days
SUTTON COLDFIELD: Odeon — May 6, 3 days
YORK: Electric — May 10, 6 days

**Happy Hampstead** (North London's playground in many moods).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* R. B. Pearce

BRIGHTON: De Luxe — May 3, 6 days
Duke of York's — May 20, 3 days
LONDON: Eros News, Piccadilly — May 24, 3 days
News Theatre, Victoria Station — May 17, 3 days
News Theatre, Waterloo Station — May 31, 3 days
Wembley Hall, Wembley — May 27, 3 days

# Shorts (*contd.*)

**The King's People**
*DISTRIBUTION:* Warner Bros.
*DIRECTION:* John Stumar
*SCRIPT:* John Drinkwater
*CAST INCLUDING:* Lady Astor, Sir Austen Chamberlain, George Bernard Shaw, Mary Clare, Violet Loraine, John Drinkwater

ACTON: Globe — May 10, 6 days
BALHAM: Pavilion — May 17, 7 days
BROMLEY: Gaumont Palace — May 17, 7 days
CAMDEN TOWN: Gaumont Palace — May 10, 6 days
CANNING TOWN: Grand — May 10, 6 days
CHELSEA: Gaumont Palace — May 10, 7 days
CLAPHAM: Majestic — May 17, 6 days
CRICKLEWOOD: Queen's — May 10, 6 days
EALING: Broadway Palladium — May 10, 6 days
EDGWARE ROAD: Grand — May 10, 6 days
FINCHLEY: New Bohemia — May 10, 6 days
FINSBURY PARK: Rink — May 10, 6 days
HAMMERSMITH: Gaumont Palace — May 10, 7 days
HENDON: Ambassador's — May 10, 6 days
ISLINGTON: Angel — May 10, 6 days
KENNINGTON: Prince's — May 17, 6 days
KENTISH TOWN: Palace — May 10, 6 days
KING'S CROSS: Cinema — May 10, 6 days
MORDEN: Gaumont Palace — May 17, 7 days
NOTTING HILL GATE: Coronet — May 13, 3 days
OLD KENT ROAD: Picture House — May 17, 6 days
PECKHAM: Gaumont Palace — May 17, 6 days
PUTNEY: Palace — May 17, 6 days
SHEPHERD'S BUSH: Pavilion — May 10, 7 days
STREATHAM: Gaumont Palace — May 17, 6 days
WANDSWORTH: Palace — May 20, 3 days
WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD: Canterbury — May 20, 3 days

**Men Against the Sea** (Documentary of North Sea trawling).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Vernon Sewell

ERITH: Oxford — May 30, 3 days
LEITH: Alhambra — May 3, 3 days
LONDON: Center News Theatre, Gt. Windmill Street — May 31, 3 days
MANCHESTER: Crescent, Hulme — May 13, 3 days
M.I.P., Moston — May 24, 3 days
SHEFFIELD: Balfour, Darnall — May 27, 3 days

**Milestones** (The varying types to be seen in England).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* A. Moncrieff Davidson

BOLTON: Crompton Way — May 3, 3 days
CATTERICK: Camp — May 10, 3 days
CONGLETON: Premier — May 24, 3 days
DALTON: Empire Palace — May 3, 2 days
HILLSBOROUGH: Kinema House — May 24, 3 days
HULL: Londesborough — May 20, 3 days
LEEDS: Imperial — May 13, 3 days
LEIGH: Sems Hall — May 17, 6 days
LIVERPOOL: Warwick — May 27, 3 days
REDCAR: Regent — May 17, 3 days
RICHMOND: Cinema — May 20, 3 days
RHOS: Palace — May 6, 3 days
SALFORD: Empire — May 13, 3 days

**The New Generation** (Nature Study).
*DISTRIBUTION:* G.B.D.
*DIRECTION:* Mary Field
MANCHESTER: Tatler, Oxford Street — May 31, 6 days

**Night Mail** (Documentary of the northward trip of the postal special).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Basil Wright and Harry Watt

BACUP: Empire — May 27, 3 days
BIRTLEY: Apollo — May 16, 1 day
HORSFORTH: Imperial — May 17, 3 days
MATLOCK: Palace — May 20, 3 days
MAYBOLE: Carrick Cinema — May 27, 2 days
MIDDLESBROUGH: Palladium — May 20, 3 days
NEWSHAM: Plaza — May 17, 2 days
PENGHAM: Regal — May 11, 1 day
SOUTH BANK, YORKS.: Empire — May 6, 3 days
SWALWELL: Cosy — May 10, 2 days

**Roof Tops of London** (Documentary).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Road — May 17, 6 days

**Secret Hiding Places** (Priest holes to be found in English country houses).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Granville Squiers

CARDIFF: Empire — May 24, 6 days
CROYDEN: Classic — May 9, 4 days
EDINBURGH: Monseigneur — May 17, 3 days

## *Feature Films for May Release*

**Big Broadcast of 1937** (Paramount)
*DIRECTOR:* Mitchell Leisen
*STARRING:* Jack Benny, Shirley Ross, Martha Ray, Burns and Allen

**Cain and Mabel** (Warner Bros.)
*DIRECTOR:* Lloyd Bacon
*STARRING:* Clark Gable, Marion Davies, Roscoe Karns, William Collier, Sr., Walter Catlett

**Come and Get It** (United Artists)
*DIRECTORS:* Howard Hawks, William Wyler
*STARRING:* Edward Arnold, Joel McCrea, Frances Farmer

**Gay Desperado** (United Artists)
*DIRECTOR:* Rouben Mamoulian
*STARRING:* Nino Martini, Ida Lupino, Leo Carrillo, Harold Huber, Mischa Auer

**Go West Young Man** (Paramount)
*DIRECTOR:* Henry Hathaway
*STARRING:* Mae West, Warren William, Randolph Scott

**Rembrandt** (United Artists)
*DIRECTOR:* Alexander Korda
*STARRING:* Charles Laughton, Gertrude Lawrence, Elsa Lanchester, John Bryning, Abraham Sofaer, Edward Chapman

**Second Bureau** (Radio)
*DIRECTOR:* W. Victor Hanbury
*STARRING:* Marta Labarr, Charles Oliver

GLASGOW: Capitol, Ibrox — May 24, 6 days
New Parade, Dennistoun — May 24, 6 days
Tivoli, Partick — May 24, 6 days
HULL: Carlton — May 3, 3 days
Langham — May 6, 3 days
Playhouse — May 3, 3 days
LONDON: Hippodrome, Camden Town — May 3, 7 days
Sphere, Tottenham Court Road — May 24, 3 days
Strand News, Agar Street — May 24, 3 days
PUDSEY: Picture House — May 6, 3 days
HING: Rivoli — May 10, 7 days

**Techierva Hut**
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
*DIRECTION:* Alberto Cavalcanti
LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Road — May 31, 6 days

**Under the Water** (French documentary with submarine photography).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* Marcel de Hubsch
*ENGLISH COMMENTARY:* Alan Howland

BRIGHTON: De Luxe — May 9, 6 days
CHERTSEY: Playhouse — May 24, 3 days
FELTHAM: Playhouse — May 10, 3 days
GREENFORD: Playhouse — May 17, 3 days
SOUTHALL: Gem — May 3, 3 days
ST. HELENS: Capitol — May 24, 3 days
TUNBRIDGE WELLS: Opera House — May 10, 6 days

# Foreign Films

**Der Ammerkoenig** ("King of the Nurses"—banned German comedy).
*DIRECTION:* Hans Steinhoff
LONDON: Studio One, Oxford Street — Following *La Kermesse Héroïque*

**Burgtheater** (Austrian).
*SCENARIO and DIRECTION:* Willi Forst
*STARRING:* Werner Krauss, Olga Tschechowa
LONDON: Academy, Oxford Street — May 1, indefinitely

**Le Dernier Milliardaire** (French satire on dictatorship).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* René Clair
*STARRING:* Paul Ollivier, Raymond Cordy
BELFAST: Film Society — May 14, 1 day
CAMBRIDGE: Arts — May 6, 3 days

**The Deserter** (Pudovkin's first sound film—Russian).
*DIRECTION:* V. I. Pudovkin
OXFORD: Scala — May 20, 3 days

**The Golem** (Czechoslovakian—French dialogue).
*DIRECTION:* Julien Duvivier
*STARRING:* Jean Gabin
LONDON: Forum, Villiers Street — May 1, indefinitely

**Kameradschaft** (German).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Sound City Distributors
*DIRECTION:* G. W. Pabst
OXFORD: Scala — May 24, 6 days

**La Kermesse Héroïque** (French comedy of the seventeenth century—now in its eighth month).
*DIRECTION:* Jacques Feyder
*STARRING:* Françoise Rosay, Jean Murat
LONDON: Studio One, Oxford Street — May 1, indefinitely

**Letze Rose** (German).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Tobis
*STARRING:* Helge Roswaenge
OXFORD: Scala — May 31, 3 days

**Pepé le Moko** (French).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* Julien Duvivier
*STARRING:* Jean Gabin
LONDON: Curzon — May 1, indefinitely

**Sylvia und ihr Chauffeur** (Austrian).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Tobis
*PRODUCTION:* Cine Central
*DIRECTION:* Hubler-Kahla
OXFORD: Scala — May 3, 6 days

★

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Three opinions, from the *Birmingham Mail*, the *Sunday Mercury* and the *Northampton Evening Telegraph*, respectively on

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**IMPERIAL INSTITUTE . LONDON, S.W.7**

The Empire Film Library was inaugurated by H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester in 1935. Film productions of the late Empire Marketing Board and G.P.O. Film Unit are available in this Library for loan to schools and for approved displays by adult societies.

Recent additions include a number of 16 mm sound-on-film subjects dealing with scenery and wild game in the Empire.

**For Catalogue (price 3d.) and forms of application for films, apply to:**

The Secretary, EMPIRE FILM LIBRARY, IMPERIAL INSTITUTE, LONDON, S.W.7

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# world FILM news

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*Daily Telegraph*
*7th April, 1937*

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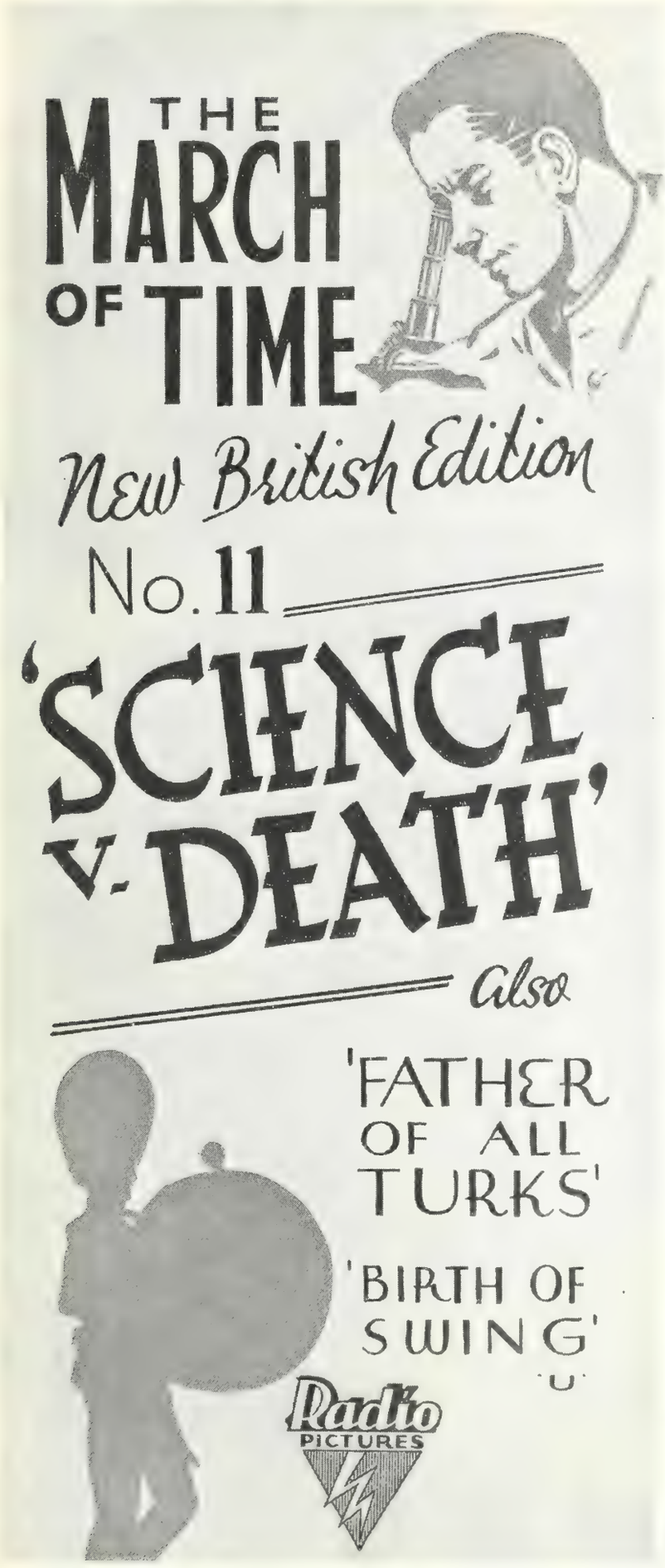


# LIST OF BOOKINGS TO MATURE ON "MARCH OF TIME" SECOND YEAR

*For its second year "MARCH OF TIME" has arranged contracts for showing in more than 1200 Cinemas. Below is a selection from a list that covers the British Isles and Irish Free State.*

| CINEMA. | PLACE. |
|---|---|
| Forum ... | Southampton. |
| Futurist ... | Birmingham. |
| Plaza ... | Regent Street. |
| Paramount ... | Tottenham Court Rd. |
| Capitol ... | Cardiff. |
| Westover ... | Bournemouth. |
| Kings ... | Bristol. |
| Paramount ... | Manchester. |
| Whiteladies | Bristol. |
| Paramount ... | Liverpool. |
| Regal ... | Torquay. |
| Paramount ... | Leeds. |
| Paramount ... | Newcastle. |
| Paramount ... | Glasgow. |
| Savoy ... | Brighton. |
| Astoria ... | Cliftonville. |
| Granada ... | Dover. |
| Central or Playhouse | Folkestone. |
| Rivoli ... | Southend. |
| Regent ... | Gt. Yarmouth. |
| Marina ... | Lowestoft. |
| Majestic or Ritz | Oxford. |
| Super Electra, Palace | Oxford. |
| Olympia ... | Newport, Mon. |
| Castle ... | Merthyr. |
| Beau Nash ... | Bath. |
| Pavilion ... | Ramsgate. |
| Silver Cinema | Worcester. |
| Theatre Royal | Preston |
| Synod Hall | Edinburgh. |
| Palace Grand or Winter Gdn. | Blackpool. |
| Capitol ... | Dublin. |
| Grafton ... | Dublin. |
| Odeon ... | South Harrow. |
| Empire ... | Mile End. |
| Empress ... | Hackney. |
| Commodore | Hammersmith. |
| Forum ... | Fulham Road. |
| Forum ... | Ealing. |
| Dominion ... | Southall. |
| Embassy ... | Harrow. |
| Carlton ... | Winchmore Hill. |
| Ritz ... | Bowes Park. |
| Cameo ... | Bear Street. |
| Alma or Empire | Luton. |
| Bruce Grove | Tottenham. |
| Coliseum ... | Harrow. |
| Tatler ... | Charing Cross Road. |
| Tussauds ... | Baker Street. |
| Lido ... | Golders Green. |
| Ritz ... | Edgware. |
| South Cinema | Hackney. |
| Hippodrome | Willesden. |
| Ritz ... | Neasden. |
| Olympia ... | Shoreditch. |
| Palaceum ... | Commercial Road. |
| Rialto, Plaza or Ritz | Maidenhead. |
| Hippodrome | Poplar. |
| Rex ... ... | Stratford. |
| Carlton ... | Upton Park. |
| Palace ... | Kensal Rise. |
| Coronation | Manor Park. |
| Capitol ... | Barking. |

| CINEMA. | PLACE. |
|---|---|
| Princess ... | Dagenham. |
| Blue Hall ... | Edgware Road. |
| Dominion ... | Walthamstow. |
| Queens ... | Bayswater. |
| Regal ... | Uxbridge. |
| Majestic ... | Woodford. |
| Ritz ... | Harringay. |
| Savoy ... | Acton. |
| Savoy ... | Enfield. |
| Curzon ... | Mayfair. |
| Tatler ... | Liverpool. |
| Kings ... | Liverpool. |
| Princes ... | Liverpool. |
| Empire ... | Chatham. |
| Ritz Central or Palace | Maidstone. |
| Pavilion ... | Cork |
| Grand Central | Dublin. |
| Majestic, Regal Super or Plaza | Gravesend. |
| Victoria ... | Cambridge. |
| Hippodrome | Rotherhithe. |
| Palace ... | Camberwell. |
| Playhouse ... | Balham. |
| Mayfair ... | Tooting. |
| Majestic ... | Mitcham. |
| Savoy ... | Croydon. |
| Hippodrome | Croydon. |
| Regal ... | Purley. |
| Majestic or St. James | Kings Lynn. |
| Savoy ... | Wandsworth |
| Prince of Wales | Lewisham. |
| Capitol ... | Forest Hill. |
| Capitol ... | Blackheath. |
| Theatre ... | Elephant & Castle. |
| Hippodrome | Putney. |
| Savoy ... | Teddington. |
| Trocadero ... | Southport. |
| Wembley Hall Cinema. | Wembley. |
| Odeon ... | Wimbledon. |
| Odeon ... | Barnet. |
| Hippodrome or Empire | Greenwich. |
| Odeon ... | Haverstock Hill. |
| State & Rialto | Dartford. |
| Odeon ... | Finchley. |
| Dominion ... | Hounslow. |
| Cranstons ... | Glasgow. |
| Hippodrome | Belfast. |
| Odeon ... | Derby. |
| Palace ... | Leicester. |
| Theatre Royal | Bradford. |
| Pioneer ... | Dewsbury. |
| Theatre Royal | Halifax. |
| Hippodrome | Sheffield. |
| Princes ... | Portsmouth. |
| Tivoli or Troxy | Portsmouth. |
| Cinema ... | Aberdare. |
| Radio Centre | East Grinstead. |
| Exchange ... | Lincoln. |
| Regal ... | Watford. |
| Odeon ... | Chingford. |
| Ritz ... | Doncaster. |
| Dorchester ... | Hull. |
| Majestic ... | West Hartlepool. |
| Elite ... | Middlesbrough. |

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world FILM news

AND TELEVISION PROGRESS
(INCORPORATING CINEMA QUARTERLY)

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# BLEST PAIR OF SIRENS

*By Basil Wright*

*ARS gratia artis*—if M.G.M.'s pregnant motto were ever embodied in any other form than that of a yawning lion, I would vote for a cameo representing the heads of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy. For how many years now have they preserved the integrity of their human comedy? Not so long as Chaplin, perhaps, but they have at least avoided a Messiah complex. Longer than the Marx brothers, whose only serious rivals they are, and will continue to be.

Whether or no they are to be listed with the great clowns depends on your affections. Maybe they are too near your personal heart. Their troubles are your troubles—magnified to the stars. If they try to move a piano they suffer not merely your rasped shins, but all the woes of Sisyphus, and those not once, but over and over again, with fiendish variations. They have but to touch an everyday object; unhesitatingly it turns and rends them. At no point in their progress through an ordinary world can they be free from the unexpected disaster, the Nemesis which spares not the innocent.

How innocent they are. Fate always finds them unprepared, though Hardy, in silent anguish, mimes his certainty that is only to be expected, that it is as usual Laurel's fault. Which Laurel tearfully admits, but wonders still at the Providence which turns each innocent gesture into the wilful smiting down of his friend and partner.

Recently they have increased their philosophical scope. Sound gave them tongues with which to ease their woes, and they have discovered the powers of song and dance as an antidote to disaster. Their dance in *Way Out West* puts them, with Chaplin, among the few great mimes.

They epitomise the great tradition of teamwork in comedy which originated with Mack Sennett. Any assessment of their genius must pay tribute to him, to Hal Roach, their spiritual father, to James Parrott and James Home, their directors, to their screen colleagues such as the divine Finlayson, and last but not least, the anonymous masters who cut their films. Note, too, that in *Way Out West* a production credit goes to Stan Laurel. This crystallises a long existing suspicion that it is his genius which evolves the general line of the films and many of the more important gags.

Laurel, in fact, might have been a great individual comedian in the Chaplin tradition. But, perhaps because he felt he was too near Chaplin and Langdon in personality, he sensibly preferred to team up with Hardy, whose superb control of physical gesture, to say nothing of his generous proportions, made a perfect foil to the more fluid and incalculable posturing of Laurel.

The partnership can now never dissolve without disaster, and so far the rumours of splits and quarrels have regularly failed to materialise.

It would be waste of time to analyse an individual film, but it is worthwhile to note how certain of their early gags have been developed into an infallible technique.

*Mutual destruction*, for instance, as when they smash up Finlayson's house while Finlayson destroys their car. This technique is very elaborate, for each side waits patiently for the other to complete each item, thus ensuring a perfectly equal balance of destroyed property.

*Variations on a simple theme* are also a fundamental of most of their films. In *Aerial Antics* the attempt to fix a wireless aerial on the roof of Laurel's house precipitated Hardy off the roof into a goldfish pond at least five times. Each time a different gag-variation appeared, until the comedy passed into the realms of cutting, and the final fall was but a flight of birds and the sound of an almighty splash. Eisenstein would have been proud to do it.

But greatest of all is the *Delayed Reaction*. Faced with a sudden revelation of monstrous import, these two innocents seldom take it in till minutes later. Once they tied up their employer in a sack and fell to kicking him—under the impression that he was Fra Diavolo. During this process Fra Diavolo himself appeared on a balcony and made them a sweeping bow. With old-world courtesy Hardy paused a moment from his labours and returned an elaborate salute. Not until he had returned to his kicking did the full meaning of the situation hit him. His convulsive movement of realisation was a masterpiece of timing.

But timing, the secret of all good comedy, is seen at its best with Laurel and Hardy. It is my ambition to visit Hollywood for the sole purpose of watching them make a film. It must be a solemn, serious, and probably bad-tempered process—but what an education in the elements of good movie.

Maybe you don't find them funny? Then you are my enemy, and I hope you will many times be forced to sit through a Laurel and Hardy feature film, tortured by the unceasing laughter of an audience of ordinary people who realise, if only subconsciously, that they are looking at a film which sums up more simply than any philosophical treatise the need for laughter, and supplies it in the form of a thin diffident Cockney and a fat man from the Southern States.

# *It's A* Babbitt's Paradise— Yes Sir.

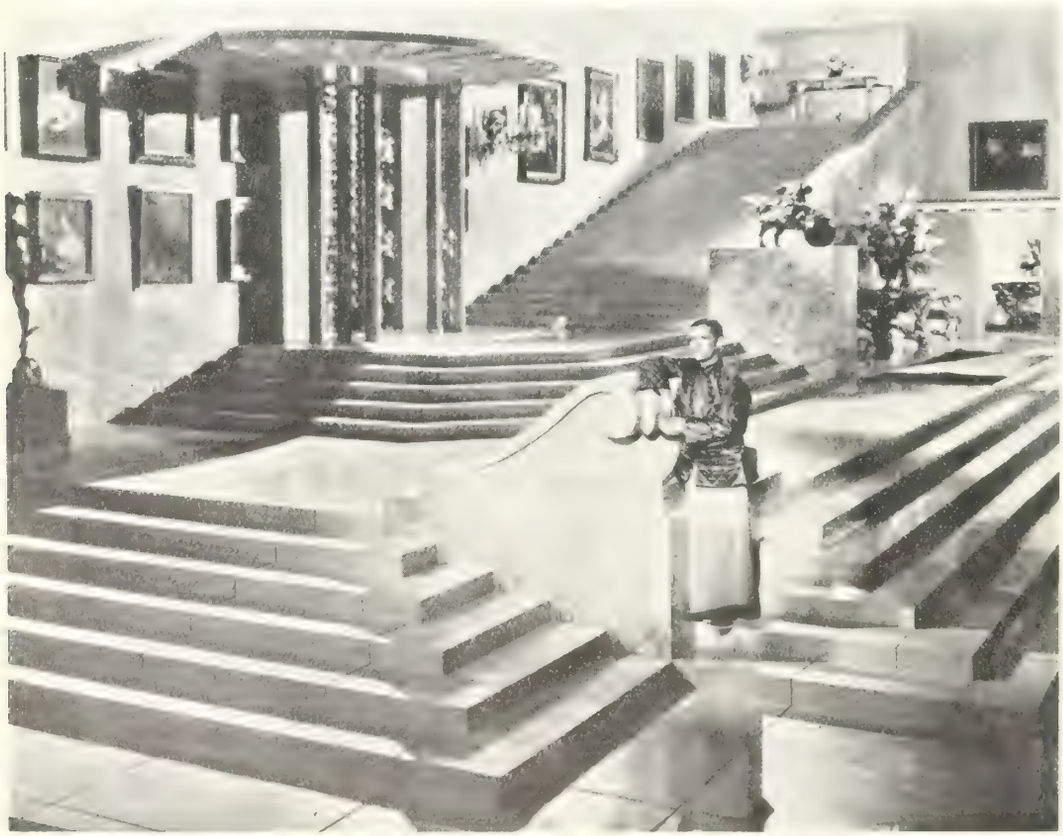
by Russell Ferguson

In a deep valley of Tibet, cut off from the world by an impassable range of mountains, lies Babbitt's paradise. Mr. Frank Capra has just returned from this strange place with a picture of it which is of great interest to students of Babbitt's social philosophy and ideals. The film is called *Lost Horizon*. Babbitt's paradise is called Shangri-la.

It is a wonderful place. Gold crops out and may be picked up without the trouble of mining. In the fertile fields, the menial work is done by a happy and contented subject-race sharing out the bounties of Nature in Christian communism and plying village handicrafts in the Gandhi manner. If you ask for a glass of water they give you a dozen cans of booze. The marriage customs are of the Melanesian kind, and the women of the subject-race are so charming and accommodating that brothels are unheard of. Plenty of booze and women. Yes, sir.

If you weary of Arcadian delights, or if like Babbitt you have aspirations to culture, you have only to climb the long, broad stairway to reach the palace of the Grand Lama and his Grand Vizier. Here you will find a synthetic heaven combining the Taj Mahal, Angkor Wat, the gardens of the Tuileries, and the finest Metro-Goldwyn interiors, with French windows and Mexican balconies. The Grand Vizier himself will receive you. He is dressed sometimes like the Archbishop of Canterbury and sometimes like a Chinese Mandarin. He will entertain you to a meal choicer than you could buy in the swellest Chicago restaurant. The wine will be of the best, and he will discourse to you of the priceless art-treasures around you and the contentment of the subject-race below. He speaks to you like a bishop and calls you "my son." He has class. Yes, sir.

After the meal, a beautiful but elusive princess will play European music on a grand piano specially carried by porters over the impassable mountain for her to play on. She is dressed in a Paris gown, but next time you see her, she will have on silk pyjamas or riding kit. Perhaps you will come across her teaching little Oriental children to sing Brahms's Cradle Song, the way the girl did in that other picture. When she moves about, a cloud of birds marks her passage, wheeling about her head the way they did in the Irish fairy-tale about Angus Mac-an-Og. You will ride after her, but she will outpace you. Soon she will be swimming naked in a pool, and you will nearly spy on her, but a squirrel will warn her and she will hide in the water-lilies. By-and-by you will catch her. It will be a romance. Yes, sir. The village girls are all right for those who like them, but this romance has class. She will tell you that although she is not a native princess, she was "almost born" here. You will talk about "magnificent concepts." She will tell you that she sent for you because in you she "saw a man whose life was empty." By-and-by, she will run away from you and you will run after her and kiss her. Then you will know that you have found your mate.



"Lost Horizon"

Another day, the Grand Vizier will take you to see the Grand Lama. He is two hundred years old and is going to die, because now that he has found you his work is finished. He could live on, if he wanted, because hardly anybody ever dies here unless he wants to, but he is going to make you the Grand Lama in his place, because you are so wise and brave and handsome and such a great soldier and diplomat. This lets him out. He will tell you how he founded this Christian communist colony two centuries ago because he could see the time coming when the nations would all be fighting and "exulting in the technique of murder." He talks about the "Christian ethic." He certainly knows some classy phrases. And he has the low-down on the international situation. Yes, sir.

Then he will die, and at the same moment a big candle beside his chair will go out. You will cry for a little, but you are too manly to cry for long. Just as you are about to accept your fate, another little princess tells you that the whole thing is a pack of lies, she's not eighty at all, she's just as young as she looks. You believe her, and battle your way over the impassable mountains. She turns into an old woman in your arms. You turn about, become a "devil-eyed stranger" and battle your way back again. The End.

In the Strand, there are no buses, because the strike is still on. Strike? There would be no strikes if people could think the way Babbitt thinks, in magnificent concepts. What we want is less of this striking. We want some place like Shangri-la, with communism for the working people and plenty of palaces and art-treasures for people like you and me who can appreciate them. And plenty of religion. Yes, sir.

# EDITORIAL

## A Matter of Flags

IT IS PROPER in a film paper to say a word about the Coronation, for the one thing in which the cinema need not fear comparison with the State is the art of showmanship. It takes a good film to beat the Navy on parade and the Navy on parade in a high sea stretches cinema to the tape; the Air Force display at Hendon lacks hardly a trifle of what it takes to complete the splendour of a de Mille spectacle; the funeral of Earl Haig had, shall we say, something of the tempo of *Potemkin*; but the standard of measurement is still with the cinema. We are brothers in arms of every guardsman who swaggers a busby at the Palace (Buckingham). But no one will deny that we do the job on a bigger scale.

Speaking strictly professionally therefore, we feel like asking the Office of Works if they are quite satisfied with the show they put up.

There was something to stir the heart under the broad banners of the City. Cheapside and Fleet Street with their great red crosses and single swords had the weight and authority of history.

In Whitehall and Trafalgar Square, by St. James's and the seats of government, the case was different. They represented the centre itself and all the proud splashes of red across the face of the world. Behind them were the Dominions and the Colonies—how many—and all they stood for. They represented Britain and all *it* stood for, in countries and cities and counties and towns, in industries and guilds and municipalities. If ever a showman had an opportunity to fly the flags of God's good earth or Empire and the fulness thereof, some fellow at the Office of Works had. And he missed it by a mile.

There were elephants for Ceylon, lions for Rhodesia, black swans for Australia, and heaven knows what other bewildering fauna and flora he might have found himself flying on May 12th, 1937. But, poor man, the wonder did not stir in him, and it did not stir in the streets he decked. The people of the world might have gone away moved that so many fields had been tilled from this little country in so small a time, and more deeply moved that we had proudly remembered them. They, unfortunately, did not.

We make this professional comment for another reason. This thing that was wrong with the poor Office of Works man—may they whip the epaulettes from him and never give him anything larger than a Birmingham shopping week to do in future—is what is wrong with our British films. We, too, forget the many fields we till from this little country and, like the Office of Works, forget the cities and counties and towns, the industries, guilds and municipalities, which lie beyond the outskirts of London. The disease, we fear, is a general one; and it is time we had a doctor for it.

## Obscurely and without publicity

EDITORIAL ATTENTION is rightly reserved for only the most important of films. Of these, believe it or not, is an obscure film called *Laughing Irish Eyes*. You have never seen it and probably never will. We have not even seen it ourselves. But editorial attention it gets because it has done something fantastic in the annals of present day film. It has made three times more than it cost. The films that are bragged about in this and other papers bring back as often as not only a third of what they cost. *Laughing Irish Eyes*, obscurely and without publicity, humbly and without star, costs eight thousand and grossed twenty-five.

There is a moral in this. We asked a Newcastle showman to tell us and this is what he said. "Big starring names are not necessary as long as the story has guts, interpolated with plenty of slap-stick comedy and songs. Keep the thing moving as fast as possible and never mind angles and expensive settings. Make a film for the smalls. The only thing you get making films for the luxury audiences is the luxury of misinterpreting their sense of entertainment and losing money."

There it is then, the word we have all been waiting for, which will cut through the jabbers of film debate and bring the British film to earth. "Big names not necessary . . . as long as there is guts . . . comedy . . . movement." Within that formula one might put Shakespeare, Defoe, any one of a dozen of the great ones.

So we had better think again when we hear these plans for hundred and fifty thousand pound productions and of the sumptuous studios and settings which are to match us with Hollywood. The word from Newcastle sounds far more sensible and, even for the art of cinema, far more promising. Two hundred per cent on the cost is a nice margin to play with; and who more than the artist wants margins? It is in the margin that he does his stuff.

## W. R. Fuller, Esq.

A KIND WORD FOR the Governors of the British Film Institute. They have got behind the members of the British Sub-Standard Association and asked the Board of Trade to implement the Moyne proposal for a quota on short films. They point out, rightly, that the educational field depends on the short films which have been first made for the theatres. They note that encouragement of short films at the theatre end will in due time mean that more good films are available to the children in the schools.

Wise as this is, we have a special reason for throwing up the editorial hand in salute. If we guess rightly, there was a good deal of fighting before the resolution was carried and there must have been nice work by, shall we say, Mr. R. S. Lambert, before the pettifogging objections of that arch nuisance to the short film, Mr. W. R. Fuller, were defeated.

For, be it known that the Film Institute has among its Governors three representatives of the film trade and Mr. W. R. Fuller is the representative and Secretary of the exhibitors. The Moyne Committee has been pleased to agree that the encouragement of short films descriptive of Britain and the Empire is a matter of national importance. But not so our Mr. Fuller. He does not like our short films of Britain and the Empire and is never tired, in and out of council, of saying so. We are pretty sure that in this matter he totally misrepresents the feelings of his exhibitors, and no more so than at the Film Institute where a national view is of paramount importance.

## Advancement Movement

IN AN EDITORIAL last month, we mentioned the possibility of an organisation being created to "sell reciprocity to Parliament and the public." The British Films Advancement Movement, sponsored as it is by public figures of repute, is a horse of another colour. It is, of course, under too high a responsibility to be associated with any direct lobbying of this sort.

In the complaint of the Film Council, that the circumstances attending the B.F.A.M.'s formation might have been more happily handled, we concur. The movement will no doubt regret them as much as we do.

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*An analysis of the character of Alexander Korda*

*by Marcel Ermans*

# ALEXANDRE LE MAGNIFIQUE

A REMARKABLE attack on Alexander Korda was published recently in the French paper *Cinematographe:* remarkable because no picture of a well-known film figure has been quite so slashing before. "Alexandre le Magnifique" it is called and it sketches the whole career from its beginnings in Budapest University to the last difficulties of Denham. There is a good deal of, shall we say, French invective in the account, but a sufficient examination of character to be worth recording. For Korda has been important to the British cinema and his character may presumably have something to do with both its present and its future. The author of the *Cinematographe* article is Marcel Ermans.

Ermans does not forget to say some nice things about Korda. He allows that with his gifts of intelligence and energy he might quite well have been a newspaper proprietor, minister, financier, business man or explorer. He notes his victim's eloquence and charm. He describes him as a remarkable man of business and a faithful friend.

But the negatives are as thick as leaves in Vallambrosa, and all the leaves are distinctly jagged. He accuses Korda of a love of display which causes him to plan too spectacular production schedules. He accuses him of being a bad director and an incompetent producer.

Here is the relevant passage:

> "To be a good producer of films, it is not sufficient to rely on all the established people. To engage Laughton, Bergner, Dietrich, Clair, Feyder, Périnal, Meerson and other celebrated actors is easy enough. It is only necessary to be able to pay them the price they ask. But what is the good of it? The creative gift of artists is not to be bought, nor is the art of employing them.
>
> "It is very nice to construct a little Hollywood some miles from London, but what is one to shoot there? In all his films, Korda takes it upon himself to address a 'message' to the world, to the confusion of the Americans. What kind of message? To illustrate the ideology of Papa Wells and to produce, at the cost of millions, such films as *Shape of Things to Come*, *Man who could work Miracles*, *Don Juan*, it was not necessary to possess sumptuous studios. It would have been better to begin at the beginning. Failing imagination and talent it would have been better to form a troupe of directors, actors and technicians; to form them into a company and go ahead with the business of production. The most celebrated producers, as the public recognises, are those who know how to command without tyranny. Producing is an honourable profession; but in Europe those who are engaged in it are ashamed of it. European producers persecute and paralyse their staff, and leave their own work to get down on the floor and do the work of their assistants.
>
> "A chief knows how to get himself obeyed or he does not. If his lieutenant is no use, let him change him but let him not take his place. What would one think of a conductor who got down from his desk in order to take the place of the first violin? Who would beat time in his stead? Nobody? Then what would become of the concert? Another conductor? Then what would become of the first? Then what other conductor? 'My brother,' immediately replies Korda, 'or my old friend Lajos. Lajos? What Lajos? Lajos Biro.'"

It is clear from what follows that Ermans has no great opinion of either Zoltan Korda or Lajos Biro. The great failing of Korda, he maintains, is that he does not know how to surround himself and that he can only recognise established people. "Unable to recognise a new Lubitsch, a future Riskin, a budding Garbo, he takes counsel of his heart—for he has one—and turns to his relatives and friends." Nor does Ermans think a great deal of Mr. Korda's films. He outlines the history of the "butcher" Biro and the "confectioner" Korda (not to mention the "ineffable" Zoltan) from *Wedding Rehearsal* on. "If I were Korda," he says of *Wedding Rehearsal*, "I would get up in the night, steal the negative and quietly drop it in the Thames. All Korda's production faults appear undisguised in this ridiculous comedy." Ermans' analysis is at least amusing.

> "Central Europeans, particularly Hungarians, have considerable dramatic gifts: they are imaginative and confident, they do not fear failure; in fact they fear only one thing, namely that the public may not understand the plot. As opposed to our young authors, who cannot or will not construct their work properly, they build a structure so solid, so heavy, so cumbrous, that it dwarfs everything and crushes the life out of the play. If by ill luck the story is dull or stupid, the spectator finds himself faced with a useless mechanism which functions to no purpose—unbearably explicit. He feels like jumping up and shouting: 'Please, please! I understand the plot, I understand the plot. Have a heart! I've had enough. How do you expect to move people to laughter or tears if you spend all your time telling them the plot?'
>
> "I am not one," says Ermans sweetly, "who declares that *Henry VIII* is the only good production of Alexander Korda. I maintain that it is as bad as any other talking films directed or produced by him.

## Historical tittletattle

*Henry VIII* is a collection of little stories and quasi-historical tittletattle. Korda has produced a film solemnly flat and cold, without rhythm, colour, or any bigness of conception in spite of the luxury of the sets and the costumes. On the ground that the English cinema has never been very brilliant some have seen in *Henry VIII* its most distinguished production. What impatience! Could they not wait till 1936, to see an inspired film in the English idiom: Robert Stevenson's strong and dignified *Tudor Rose* in which all the roles are not only well written but also well played. *Henry VIII* is no more than a demonstration of the talent of one man, the amazing Charles Laughton. Laughton is one of the principal comedians of our age, and the Shakespearian insolence of his interpretation saved Korda's film.

"Elisabeth Bergner did not succeed in saving *Catherine the Great*, which was twice as boring as *Henry VIII* and that largely because of Biro's scenario, added to the fact that none of the characters were interpreted by the right actor. Bergner's Catherine of Russia, a young girl; Fairbanks Junior as Pierre III; such are the enormous blunders in casting which delight the heart of one who wishes to pass himself off as a master of film production. Let us pass over *Don Juan*, *Things to Come* and *Rembrandt*, which are not more than demonstrations of the talent of a distinguished cameraman, Georges Périnal. Let us pass over *The Ghost Goes West*, whose actual success will not conceal for long its intrinsic poverty.

## Sauce by "Butcher" Biro

"The *Red Robe*, the *Invincible Armada* will not be the last of the series. All periods will be passed in review, all the great figures of history will be dug up, skinned, filleted, broken and reset, unpicked and restitched, cooked, recooked and seasoned with *Wedding Rehearsal* sauce by butcher Biro and confectioner Korda. Let us wait to see these expensive gentlemen get busy with the private lives of Charles V, Louis XIV, Nero, Tamerlan, and Alexander the Great, completely dwarfed by Alexander the Magnificent, '*baronnet de Denhamm en Middlesex*'."

The final peroration:

"Well, it remains that Alexander Korda is an amiable gentleman who gives a livelihood to quite a number of worthy people. From the moral point of view he has a right to our esteem, and in the present state of society he represents a beneficent force. My natural indulgence causes me (not being myself a shareholder in London Films) to congratulate him in making money circulate. I have no regrets that this clever business man has not been attracted to some industry other than cinema—automobiles, for instance, cement, or even preserves. No, I will not even reproach him with being an incomplete artist and a creator without resource. Nor do I find it a fault that he will only work in a brilliant and expensive atmosphere. I am sorry because he is simply an ambitious man, like any other ambitious man, and because his ambition is so naïve. Ah, if Korda had been a *farceur*, everything would be different, and how welcome he would have been these days when there are so few amusing picturesque and 'different' people.

"Let us be content to thank Alexander Korda for having built near London in the middle of an immense park the most expensively equipped studio in Europe. In our time, as we all know, the spiritual is obscured by the intellectual, and the intellectual by the technical. One should not be surprised to see palaces thrown up to shelter gigantic machines placed at the service of shallow ideas and making ephemeral and artificial productions. But one day perhaps some genius will arise to make use of the marvellous instrument which lies at Denham.

"On that day a brilliant director, a poet, a creator, a lion like Stroheim, or a magician like Murnau, will reign upon one or more of the floors at Denham, and we shall wink at each other and say, 'Old Korda knew what he was doing after all'."

**"I am not one who declares that *Henry VIII* is the only good production of Alexander Korda"**

It is an amusing diatribe and, of course, partly true. It is true that his judgments of friendship have not always been judgments of inspired production and that brother Zoltan is not perhaps Britain's most promising director. It is true that many more celebrated names have gone into Denham than have emerged from it. It is true that the roles of producer, director (and of financier too) have got more mixed than was sometimes wise. But there is another interpretation, kinder to Korda and nearer the fact.

Korda has been ambitious and his ambition has at least been the means of giving scale for the first time to British production. He has made it think of big things and has pointed, like Cortez, to the horizon. The results have been sometimes disappointing and more often than not his films have been more expensive than they should have been. All this because Korda has not succeeded in making organisation keep in step with that ambition. He has, in truth, not known how to surround himself. It is a colossal weakness in a man otherwise brilliant which may well prove his undoing: all the more so in a business, like film, where so many factors are involved in production and so many important responsibilities must be delegated. Korda has had the overmastering desire to create a great film tradition round himself and to do it quickly, but the very quality of his ambition may be too individualistic to be content with that position of *first among equals* in a group of great abilities which is the key to efficient film production. Not otherwise does ambition in the corporate creative process which is cinema "fall upon the other."

## In a bunch of dimwits

But this need not blind anyone to the fact that Korda's quality has been of historic importance in the development of the British cinema. He has made it think in larger terms. He has also, by his mistakes, made it think in more sensible terms. And to match Ermans' peroration, this can be said: He is still, to-day, the only fighting figure in the British cinema independent enough and tough enough in the cause of the British film to match swords with the American bosses like Eckman. One may not like the British film he stands for, and many wise critics do not. One may doubt the economics of his films and wonder at the economics of his studios, and many sensible observers do. One may sigh that his dreams and his schemes should so often be doomed to scrambled and tangled and second-rate execution, and embarrass themselves in their final cost. One may doubt, and many do, that he is the best leader for the British cinema; for he is on the one hand not a native, nor is he a born leader who knows how to keep strong people with him. But he is the only imaginative figure one sees in a bunch of dimwits and the only courageous figure in a bunch of lily-livers. And that will do for now.

# The British Films Advancement Movement

by

## THE FILM COUNCIL

A LETTER has been circulated to selected persons of the film trade and others. Its heading is the British Films Advancement Movement. It is addressed from the Field House, off Fetter Lane, E.C.4. It is signed by Lord Strabolgi (the aforetime Lt.-Comdr. Kenworthy), Sir William Wayland, M.P., and Professor Graham Kerr, M.P. It invites our interest in a movement to *ensure that the public or national—as distinct from the purely industrial—point of view, shall be taken into consideration in connection with any legislation or other effort to build up the British industry.*

It is an innocent enough document. The national flag is at the mast head. The purposes are high. The sponsors are men of high repute. There is the careful phrase: *You will not be asked to give any financial support to the movement.* But if our eyes do not deceive us, and we do not think they do, the address from which this document originates is a very familiar one. The Field House, off Fetter Lane, E.C.4, is, if we mistake not, none other than the Field House, off Chancery Lane, alias Bream's Buildings, E.C.4, the more usual address of Editorial Services, Limited; and Editorial Services is a professional publicity organisation. It is an organisation of good repute, doing a first-rate service of publicity for, among others, the National Union of Teachers, the Coastal Trade Development Council, and the Greyhound Racing P. R. Committee. On investigation, we find that inquiries regarding the British Films Advancement Movement are in fact dealt with in the office of Editorial Services Ltd. Moreover, the circular to the Press reporting the opening meeting of the movement was issued on the note-paper of this firm.* At this point, the association was open and direct.

The suggestion is that, however disinterested and public-spirited the British Films Advancement Movement now is under the sponsorship of Lord Strabolgi, Sir William Wayland, and Professor Graham Kerr, it has in the first place been promoted by a publicity organisation and in association with certain definite interests.

The objects of the British Films Advancement Movement were defined by resolution at the organising meeting on April 22nd, when it was decided on the motion of Lord Strabolgi that a Council be formed "for the purpose of taking such action as may be deemed expedient to bring before the public, public authorities, social and educational institutions, and the Government, the national, economic and educational importance of British films, and to secure public support for such legislation or other measures as may be necessary to assure to British films fair treatment in all countries which market film products in the United Kingdom."

We do not for one moment suggest that the present sponsors will allow the new movement to deviate from this aim and to become subservient to any one sectional policy. But as a paper responsible to the public interests of all who are concerned in films either professionally or as consumers we are in duty bound to investigate the antecedents of a movement advancing so important a claim at the present time. And we are profoundly disturbed lest a precedent be established of not stating the origins, at first necessarily sectional in their interests, of an organisation inviting public support for a great national aim.

In an industry so full of interests and politics as the film industry we have a right to know who, at one stage or another, has been behind the curtain. We fear that Editorial Services Ltd. may have carried the art of promotion—a proper enough art in the exercise of propaganda—into a realm where it becomes a danger. The moment public relations cease to be an art of emphasis and touch on obscurantism, we lay ourselves open to the dangerous situation in which lobbying becomes muddled up with legislation.

To remove these fears, to invest the British Films Advancement Movement with that claim to whole-hearted public support which rests on a full knowledge of all the facts we ask it to answer the following four questions:

(1) Who gave Editorial Services Ltd. the commission to initiate the scheme resulting in the formation of the British Films Advancement Movement?

(2) Was this service paid for and if so, by whom?

(3) Which members of the film trade were directly involved in the initiating move preparatory to the public launching of the movement?

(4) Who is now paying for the publicity and organising work of the British Films Advancement Movement?

(*See also editorial, page* 5)

**Sir Basil Clarke :**

Born 1879. Journalist since 1903. Sub-Editor *Manchester Guardian* 1904, later Special Correspondent. Entered service of the *Daily Mail* in 1910, acting as their war correspondent 1914-16. Later War Correspondent for Reuters and the Press Association at G.H.Q. British Army, France. Director Special Intelligence Branch, Ministry of Reconstruction, 1918. Editor, *Sheffield Independent*, 1919. Director Public Information, Ministry of Health, 1920-3; lent as Director of Public Information to the Irish Government, Dublin Castle, 1920-2. Knighted in 1923. Since 1924 managing director of Editorial Services Ltd., also director of Bedford Press Ltd.

**The Lord Strabolgi :**

Lt.-Comdr. J. M. Kenworthy, 10th Baron, born 1886, entered R.N. in 1902, Lt.-Comdr. 1916, Admiralty War Staff 1917, Ass. Chief of Staff, Gibraltar 1918, retired 1920. Liberal M.P. 1919-26, Labour M.P. for Hull 1926-31. Chairman British Branch of the Interparliamentary Union 1929-31 and of the Advisory Committee on Sea Fisheries 1926-32. Vice-Pres. Hull branch British Legion, Pres. Hull Navy League Cadet Corps. Lord Strabolgi is interested in the film industry as director of Cinechromatic Ltd., he is also a director of Rich & Cowan Ltd., Ruths-Acra Accumulators Ltd., Surgical Equipment Ltd., and joint managing director of Ruths International Accumulators Ltd.

* It is also of interest to note that Mr. J. Page Thornton, the Hon. Secretary (pro. tem.), of the British Films Advancement Movement, was until February, 1932, a director of Editorial Services Ltd., and is still registered as a shareholder in the last return of that company (24th June, 1936).

# GANGSTER PICTURE OF 1806

## *by Francisco Goya*

**1**

*The Friar held up by the bandit*

**2**

*He grips the gun*

**3**

*They struggle for it*

**4**

*The man of God prepares to stun the gangster*

**5**

*The gangster escapes but the worthy friar shoots him*

**6**

*He ties up the bleeding victim while peasants rush up*

"THE Capture of the famous bandit Margato by the lay brother Friar Pedro de Zaldivia on June 10th, 1806" is the collective title of the dramatic picture sequence illustrated on this page and painted, probably soon after the event, by Francisco Goya (1746-1828). The story of this sensational capture is told on six small wooden panels (28 by 37 cm., now in the Art Institute, Chicago).

*The story:* the hold-up of the Friar near a country inn—he grips the bandit's gun—they struggle for it. Having snatched the gun from the assailant's hands and thrown him to the ground, the valiant man of God prepares to stun the wicked and indignant gangster with a mighty blow of the butt-end, but that worthy, quickly recovered from his surprise, has jumped to his feet and now seeks safety in flight, attempting to run after his horse that is galloping away in the background. Equally resolute, however, the friar has already reversed the gun and frustrated the other's effort with a well-aimed shot. The deed is done. It only remains to tie up the bleeding victim, while peasants armed with sticks rush to the scene to take him to the local lock-up.

This astonishing set of pictures justifies the claim that Goya, whose work foreshadowed and influenced every progressive art movement from Delacroix and Daumier to the present time, should also be regarded as a direct ancestor of the film. For it is the analysis of a dramatic action occupying but a few seconds in as many "frames" that distinguishes this series from other painted story sequences and constitutes a decisive advance towards a new artistic aim. The technical means for the realisation of his aim were not invented until some 90 years afterwards, for in the sphere of pictorial crime reportage "The capture of the famous bandit Margato" constitutes the decisive link between the illustrated broadsheet and the modern gangster film commencing almost a century later with *The Great Train Robbery*.

F. D. KLINGENDER.

# PEOPLE OF THE STUDIOS

## Denham

A short while before the Coronation, Anna Neagle, as Queen Victoria, was crowned at Denham in a vast replica of Westminster Abbey, complete in every detail and erected in less than a week. Miss Neagle took her seat in St. Edward's chair, around her extras in robes and uniforms banked almost to the roof of the huge stage. The ceremony included even the incident of the Archbishop placing the ring on the wrong finger of the Queen.

Herbert Wilcox, who directs and supervises this production of *Victoria the Great* for Imperator Film Productions, made his first film, *Chu Chin Chow*, fourteen years ago in Germany, entirely with British artists. He later worked at Elstree, forming the Herbert Wilcox Production Unit in 1935, since then making *Limelight*, *The Three Maxims* and *London Melody*, with Anna Neagle.

**Herbert Wilcox directs "Victoria the Great"**

A thick fog on the set of Battersea Bridge, a model of the giant power station looming in the background—*The Squeaker* in production. Georges Périnal, formerly chief photographer to René Clair, is cameraman under William K. Howard's direction.

* * *

Tentatively called *The Drum*, a story by A. E. W. Mason was started here last month. Sabu, Indian boy star of *Elephant Boy*, plays the lead, and Zoltan Korda directs. Production Manager Geoffrey Boothby has sailed for India, where atmosphere shots are being taken in technicolour on the North-West frontier. Screen play by Oliver Garrett, American scenarist responsible for *City Streets*, *The Story of Temple Drake* and *Night Flight*.

* * *

Basil Dean is making Galsworthy's *First and Last* for Alexander Korda. Production began on May 6th, with Vivien Leigh, Leslie Banks and Laurence Olivier.

* * *

*Revolt in the Desert*, Lawrence of Arabia film, announced by both London Films and New World, has been abandoned. Production was started by London Films over a year ago, with Walter Hudd in the leading part and Zoltan Korda directing, and later Harold Schuster restarted the picture for New World, with James Wong Howe at the camera. Silly rumours have been passed around that the decision to abandon the film was due to Government intervention. Money more likely.

* * *

Robert Donat returns to Denham for *South Riding*, which Victor Saville is producing. The company has prepared the way for the picture by taking atmosphere shots in Yorkshire.

## Pinewood

On May 3rd, Jack Buchanan's own production company was launched, and shooting began on *Smash and Grab*. Leading lady to detective Buchanan is Elsie Randolph, who has partnered him on stage and screen for many years. Tim Whelan, who recently completed *Action for Slander* and *Farewell Again* (well reviewed), is directing. Five pictures are scheduled for the coming year by this company, to be made at Pinewood and released through G.F.D.

* * *

To those who saw some of her work on the stage, it was a pleasant surprise to hear that Adele Astaire, now Lady Cavendish, sister and once dancing partner to Fred Astaire, was making a professional come-back via films. It is reported that she will play female lead to Jack Buchanan in one of his next pictures.

* * *

Grosvenor Films have a musical production before the cameras, starring Arthur Tracy ("The Street Singer"). Harcourt Templeman is producing and Sinclair Hill directing.

Templeman joined the film industry in 1919 as associate producer for Stolls, and later for A.S.F.I. He was appointed production manager at British and Dominions in 1931, and four years later he became managing director of Grosvenor. Sinclair Hill had much pre-war experience in Continental films, since then writing, directing and producing many English pictures. He is now Chairman and Director of Grosvenor.

## Ealing

*Keep Fit*, with George Formby, most quickly rising British star, took the floor last month, with Anthony Kimmins directing. Kimmins also wrote the dialogue with Austin Melford. Supporting cast includes Guy Middleton, Kay Walsh, Gus McNaughton and Denier Warren.

* * *

In spite of his activities at Denham, Basil Dean continues as producer here. Noted for his work in the theatre as well as on the screen, Mr. Dean founded Associated British Producers in 1929, and has since been on the directorate of A.T.P. Among the best known of his films are *Escape*, *Loyalties*, *The Constant Nymph*, *Autumn Crocus* (he was also responsible for the stage productions of the last two), *Lorna Doone*, *Whom the Gods Love* and *Queen of Hearts*. He recently produced the Dodie Smith (C. L. Anthony) play *Call it a Day*, which had a successful run at the Globe Theatre.

**Jimmy Wong Howe, now in Hollywood shooting "Prisoner of Zenda"**

## Beaconsfield

Herbert Brenon, director of *Plunder in the Air* for Tudor Films, started his career as a call-boy in a West End theatre, working his way up as actor, author, and finally as a Hollywood director. He made the first version of *Beau Geste* (a colour version is to be made in Hollywood), and since his return to England in 1934 he has directed *Living Dangerously*, *Someone at the Door* and *The Dominant Sex*, all for B.I.P.

* * *

Jean Gillie, leading lady of *Plunder in the Air*, got her break in pictures when Jack Buchanan chose her for a half-minute appearance in *Brewster's Millions*. She has recently been second star to Elsie Randolph in both the screen and stage versions of *This'll Make You Whistle*.

## Sound City

A film of the White Sea trawlers is being produced by Conway productions, a new company headed by H. Fraser Passmore. A unit has returned from a four weeks' trip to the White Sea on a Grimsby trawler, where they made a number of exterior sequences, and interior shooting has begun in the studio.

## Elstree

Walter Mycroft, Director of Productions, graduated into the film industry through Fleet Street, where for seven years he was film critic of the *Evening Standard*. In 1927 he became scenario editor of British International Pictures (now Associated British Pictures), and five years later he was appointed to his present position. Pictures include *Blossom Time*, *Heart's Desire*, *Drake of England*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *Ourselves Alone*, *Glamorous Nights* and *Let's Make a Night of It* (re-titled from *Radio Revue of* 1937).

## Mayflower Films

Clemence Dane has been signed by Erich Pommer to script Daphne Du Maurier's novel *Jamaica Inn*, which is scheduled as the first production of this new Laughton-Pommer company. Charles Laughton himself will be the star of this smuggling yarn.

# *People of the Studios*

*(contd.)*

## AMERICA

### United Artists

Most interesting of the United Artists' line-up is Selznick's International's *The Prisoner of Zenda*. Taken from the novel by Anthony Hope, and directed by John Cromwell, the cast includes Ronald Colman, Madeleine Carroll, Douglas Fairbanks jun., Mary Astor, Aubrey Smith, Raymond Massey and David Niven. Jimmy Wong Howe, cameraman of *The Thin Man*, *Viva Villa*, *Translantic* and *Fire Over England*, has replaced Bert Glennon. The change was made so that Glennon might serve as photographic observer on Selznick's next technicolour production, *Let Me Live*, to be directed by William A. Wellman ("Wings"), with Fredric March starring.

Walter Wanger's *Vogues of* 1938 is six days' shooting behind *Zenda*. Sam and Bella Spewack, joint authors of the Broadway success *Boy Meets Girl*, wrote the screen play, and Irving Cummings directs. Warner Baxter, Joan Bennett, Francis Langford, Mischa Auer and Alan Mowbray are in the cast. Charles Boyer, recently seen in *History is Made at Night*, is to become a producer as well as an actor under the terms of a contract he has signed with Wanger. His first production will probably be *The Man with Twelve Models*.

Gene Towne and Graham Baker, authors of *History is Made at Night*, have completed their adaption of *Ali Baba Goes to Town*, Eddie Cantor's first for 20th Century-Fox, and return to Wanger to script *Stand-in* for Leslie Howard.

Goldwyn has *Stella Dallas* before the cameras, for United Artists release, with Barbara Stanwyck, John Boles, Anne Shirley and Alan Hale. King Vidor directs. In 1925, Douglas Fairbanks jun. played his first important part in the silent version of *Dallas*. In the present production, getting his first big break, is another son of a famous father, Tim Holt, son of Jack Holt—and in the Fairbank's role.

Goldwyn has signed on Honolulu's Shirley Temple, *Kuulei Declercq*, an eight-year-old entertainer. We are told that since infancy she has sung, Hula'ed, played the ukelele and is one of Honolulu's best known artists. Another to join Goldwyn is Virginia Verrill, whose voice was dubbed for Jean Harlow's in a singing sequence some years ago. She is to be built up as "the singing Myrna Loy," and will have the lead in *The Goldwyn Follies*, after being loaned to Wanger for *Vogues of* 1938.

### Warner Bros.

Mervyn LeRoy is making another picture for Warners. The title is *The Deep South*, the story is by Ward Greene (from a novel), and the stars are Claude Rains, Otto Kruger and Gloria Dickson. William Dieterle's *Emile Zola* nears completion, and judging by studio reports it gives Paul Muni a fair chance of living up to his reputation, consolidated with *Pasteur* and *The Good Earth*. The story is based on the life of *Zola*, from his book *I Accuse*. Cast also includes Bonita Granville, Joseph Schildkraut and Gale Sonergaard.

Robert Montgomery and Marion Davies meet for the first time in *Ever Since Eve*, Cosmopolitan production being made for Warners with Lloyd Bacon directing. Original story by Gene Baker and Margaret Lee.

James Whale, who has just finished *The Road Back* for Universal, goes to Warners to direct Brian Aherne in *The Great Garrick* for Mervyn LeRoy.

### Paramount

*High Wide and Handsome*, Irene Dunne picture directed by Rouben Mamoulian, and Wesley Ruggles' *I Met Him in Paris* (Claudette Colbert), are in the cutting room. *Angel*, with Marlene Dietrich, Herbert Marshall, Ernest Cossart, Edward Everett Horton and Herbert Mundin, progresses under Ernst Lubitsch. Charles Lang is doing the camerawork.

Other pictures in production include *The Last Train from Madrid*—a picture of the Spanish revolution, action of which is intercut with actual Madrid battle shots, taken by cameramen at present in Spain—and *Easy Living*, a Jean Arthur-Edward Arnold film.

Oscar Homolka, who played in *Rhodes of Africa* and Hitchcock's *Sabotage*, starts in Hollywood in the Lucien Hubbard technicolor picture *Ebbtide*, from the novel by Robert Louis Stevenson.

Two more stars to sign with Paramount are Anna May Wong and Fredric March. Miss Wong's first production for the company is tentatively set for September, but no title is yet announced. March is scheduled to play the part of a pirate-patriot in *The Buccaneer*, to be made by Cecil B. DeMille. Franciska Gaal, Hungarian actress, plays opposite.

Despite the fact that permission has been granted to Universal for Deanna Durbin to sing excerpts from *Carmen* in a forthcoming film, Paramount is going ahead with its plans to film the opera in full, with Howard Eastbrook producing.

### M.G.M.

There is still doubt as to when Norma Shearer will return to work, but Hunt Stromberg has the cameras ready to turn on *Marie Antoinette*, first picture assigned to Miss Shearer since the death of her husband, Irving Thalberg. Claudine West has been working on the script. Second Shearer picture will probably be *Pride and Prejudice*.

Kipling having proved himself good box-office in the form of *Elephant Boy* and *Captains Courageous*, M.G.M. have set Talbot Jennings working on the script of *Kim*, for Freddie Bartholomew. Louis Leighton will produce.

George Seitz is directing the Bayard Veiller mystery play *The Thirteenth Chair*, in which Madge Evans, Dame May Whitty, Elissa Landi and Lewis Stone head the cast of only twenty-five.

Hackett and Goodrich, together with Stromberg (now producing *The Firefly*), are preparing a second sequel to *The Thin Man*, to be titled *The Thin Man Returns*. William Powell, Myrna Loy, and rough-haired terrier Asta are the stars, as before.

Frank Borzage (his latest picture: *History is Made at Night*), directs *Three Rooms in Heaven*, with Joan Crawford and Spencer Tracy starring. It is Borzage's first job with this company. Joseph Mankiewicz will produce the picture.

Now that London Films and New World have dropped their proposed Lawrence of Arabia picture, Hollywood intends to take on the job. M.G.M. have registered the title *With Lawrence of Arabia* at the Hays Office—though it is understood that Universal had previously registered the title *Lawrence in Arabia*.

### And Others . . .

Mortimer Offner is scripting a picture based on the lives of the late Vernon and Irene Castle, famous dancing pair. Fred Astaire will play Vernon—though Ginger Rogers is not cast as Irene. Pandro S. Berman produces for Radio.

Alongside the news that Norma Shearer is making a picture of *Marie Antoinette*, comes word that Universal have *Queen at Fourteen* in the scripting stage. Deanna Durbin takes the name part.

Columbia has three "tough guy" pictures on the floor. Phil Rosen directs Jack Holt in *Blazing Glory*, Harry Lachman directs Richard Dix in *Once a Hero* (with Fay Wray) and Hamilton MacFadden directs Ralph Bellamy in *With Kind Regards*.

## Japan

Tokyo Talking Pictures Corporation has completed a modern studio in Detagaya. No reports of current or forthcoming productions are yet to hand.

## China

Plans are afoot in China to expand the film industry on Hollywood lines, and arrangements are being made whereby young Chinese may be sent to America to study studio technique. The Government lends its moral, though not its monetary, support. T. J. Holt, head of a theatre chain operating in Shanghai and Nanking, is paying an advance visit to California to test the ground and bring home ideas for studio reorganisation. Sixty to seventy films a year have lately been produced in China, mainly silent—but at the moment there are only two hundred theatres to serve a population of 400,000,000.

*Chinese technicians will go to Hollywood to study new methods*

## *People of the Studios (contd.)*

### CONTINENTAL

#### Austria

Ski-ing and other Austrian sports will figure in a fashion film which a large Austrian industrial society has sponsored for showing at the Paris World Exhibition. More than 150 actors and actresses, sports stars and mannequins, are to take part.

#### Palestine

Cinematographic illustrations of Bible stories for children are being produced here by Aiden Crawley, ex-newspaperman and son of the Dean of Windsor, who has with him full sound equipment. The party remains in Palestine for nine months, during which time they will tour the whole country. Films will be distributed by School Films of London.

#### France

Emile Pathé, president of Pathé Marconi Co., who with his brother Charles and two other Frenchmen started Pathé Frères in 1896, died recently in Pau. Responsible for the development of the first French projection machines, French feature pictures and the first newsreel, he set up an American branch in 1908 and began operations in Jersey, making such early serials as *The Perils of Pauline*, as well as newsreels of local events.

Julien Duvivier, director of *The Golem* and *Pépé le Moko* which were running simultaneously in London, is making *Un Carnet de Bal* ("A Ticket to the Ball"). Cast includes Harry Baur, Fernandel and Françoise Rosay (of *Kermesse Héroïque*). Several writers, including Bernard Zimmer and Jean Sarment, have been working on the dialogue. Exteriors will be shot in the Italian Lake District.

Ferdinand Earle, old-timer of Hollywood, is now in Paris producing coloured fantasy films after the style of Len Lye. Earle says of his first film *Amar:* "It is what music is to the ear, and combined with music it will convey both by the ear and eyes simultaneously, a multiple sensation quite novel and very curious." Invention is patented, and Earle heads the company promoting production.

Erich von Stroheim plays the lead in *La Grande Illusion*, war film written by Jean Renoir and Charles Spaak, directed by Renoir. Jean Gabin, now known in England for his acting in *Pépé le Moko*, is also in the cast, and Joseph Kosma wrote the music.

Stroheim, who is fifty-two this year, was born in Vienna, and began his career as an army officer and newspaper man in Austria, later becoming a magazine writer in the U.S.A. He has written a number of stage plays, and directed as well as acted in films—in 1926 he was chosen as one of the best ten directors of the year.

#### Italy

Bavaria Films, of Germany, have a unit in Italy making exteriors for *His Majesty's Singer*, to star Italy's number one tenor, Benjamino Gigli. Gigli has played in a number of German pictures, and he seems to be more popular in Germany than in his native country.

Tobis also has a company in Pompeii working on a new Emil Jannings picture.

# GOING, GOING, GONE

## *Exit D. W. Griffith, Inc.*

About thirty people attended the D. W. Griffith, Inc., receivership sale held in New York City in April.

The company was formed in 1920 by giving D. W. Griffith all the common stock in exchange for his studio and all other film assets. Class A. stock was sold to the public and at the present time there are about 5,000 stockholders. Griffith was signed as a director for ten years. During the first five years the company took in over $8,000,000.* This money had evaporated at the end of that time due to many causes, not however, it was agreed, because of the dishonesty of anyone.

*Way Down East* and *Orphans of the Storm* made large profits—the former was one of the biggest money-makers of all time. But *America* and *Isn't Life Wonderful*, made at the end of the period, cost a great deal and were not very profitable.

In 1925, Griffith was farmed out to Paramount, and later to United Artists, D. W. Griffith, Inc., receiving over $1,000,000 in return for his services.

This money was invested before the crash in stocks—American Can, Continental Can and Standard Oil of California.

Griffith later put in a claim for $795,000 as salary due to him. This was settled by giving him 500 shares of United Artists—the shares at that time being worth about $60,000 or $70,000.

The company decided in 1931 to produce a picture in order to make some money. $200,000 was allotted for it. *The Struggle* (a discussion of the prohibition question) was made in a small independent studio in the Bronx which had formerly been the Edison plant. The picture was a dismal failure due to censorship cuts, faulty recording and other difficulties, and returned only $50,000. In October, 1935, the company went into receivership.

The sale offered the studio property at Mamaroneck, New York, the rights to twenty-one pictures, and the office furniture. The studio property consists of a 29½ acre peninsula jutting into Long Island Sound off Orienta Point at Mamaroneck. The studio and other buildings were torn down about ten years ago.

The pictures included the famous war-film, *Hearts of the World*, *Isn't Life Wonderful* (made partly in Germany), two Dorothy Gish comedies *Nobody Home* and *I'll Get Him Yet*, the ill-fated *Struggle* and others, as well as unproduced stories and scenarios. Also included were the musical scores of the films.

Woodson R. Oglesby, attorney representing D. W. Griffith, was the successful bidder for the films and the property, Griffith wishing to wind up the receivership. He offered $500 for the films, subject to storage charges of $1,783. (A Mr. Goldstein offered $500 for one picture, *The Struggle*, but all were to be sold in a group.) Oglesby offered $5,000 cash for the property at Mamaroneck, said to be worth about $170,000, which is subject to mortgages and tax liens totaling more than $150,000, including a note of $29,000 held by D. W. Griffith against the property, which Albert D. Levin (representing John W. Manning, the creditor in whose behalf the receivership suit was filled) felt should revert to the stockholders rather than to Griffith personally.

An outsider bid $100 for the furniture, plus $125 storage charges.

Mr. Levin raised objections to the sale, claiming that the court should fix a minimum figure for each item and that he did not know the exact values and other data. The court objected to the sale being postponed and directed that it proceed, Levin having had almost two years to investigate. Levin also claimed that originally 1,000 shares of United Artists stock had been transferred, either to Griffith, Inc., or to D. W. Griffith. The judge ruled that Levin could petition the court for an order to have the subject of the disposal of the 500 shares reopened at a later date.

And so D. W. Griffith, Inc. fades out.

* During his 23-year career, Griffith spent $20,000,000 on some 400 pictures which earned $60,000,000, mostly for others.

**Theodore Huff**

## Political Forum

Banning by Germany's film censors of a film entitled *The Land We Love* has won considerable attention from the daily press. The film was made by Tobis and directed by non-Aryan Reinhold Schuenzel, a director considered so able by Hitler that he was allowed the privilege of working in German studios.

Schuenzel apparently abused this privilege by inserting scenes in the film which were interpreted as satire on the Nazi government. The report of the censorship committee's reaction was such that Schuenzel on hearing it, fled the country. He has since accepted an offer from Hollywood.

In Germany scripts of all films must be submitted to the authorities and the script of *The Land We Love* was sufficiently innocuous to be passed. The finished film, however, appeared before the censorship board with subtle twists and additional dialogue. One piece which a Chief of Police is given to say runs:

"In this country we do not read books. We swim, we wrestle, we fence, we lift weights, but we do not allow our muscles to be softened by intellectualism."

Dr. Goebbels is reported to have seen the film and to have exhibited strong feelings on the treatment. He is well-known for his dislike of "aliens who ridicule Germany."

* * *

A series of films describing the industries and culture of the various republics of the U.S.S.R. has been planned. The various sections of the Soviet film industry all over the country will contribute towards it. The films will be exhibited in schools and at lectures.

The northern sea route and the work of Soviet stations in the Arctic will be treated in one of the films. Others to be made in Central Asia will describe the conquest of the Kara-Kum desert. Six expeditions are planned for the near future and production will begin immediately.

# Hollywood Learned from the Crash; Will England?

**DR. MARTIN FREUDENTHAL,** *the writer of this article, formerly Counsellor of Legation at the German Foreign Office, some years ago was sent to New York and Hollywood on a special mission which enabled him to study thoroughly the American and international film situation.*

FIVE years ago I was in Hollywood on behalf of the German Government. At that time the American film industry was in the grip of a serious depression. A year's visit, during which I had opportunities of talking to all sorts of film people, from extras and third-assistants to Chaplin, Thalberg and Laemmle, gave me ample opportunity of studying Hollywood's film slump and how it was tackled. What I saw there comes vividly to mind at the present time when the British film industry in turn is fighting its own difficulties.

The British slump has come upon us in a boom period of general trade, unheralded by fore-warnings. Hollywood's slump was largely a symptom of a general trade-depression. This difference in natural trade conditions is important enough, but at the same time a study of the Hollywood slump reveals many significant resemblances to the present position of the industry in this country. Merely to recall the courage and endurance of the Americans in fighting their way back to prosperity ought to inspire the British with similar qualities; especially if they reflect that the Americans won through.

## Outspending—a Triumph

They found, when they came to set their house in order, that actual production was costing far too much. There were many reasons for this—overspending and over-capitalisation, a relic of the earlier boom-period which attracted so much investment. Competition between rival companies played its part. Production costs were further swollen by that sort of nepotism, not unknown in British studios, which gives important salaries to unimportant relatives of the boss. In short, all executives who were engaged in making the films, and many who were not, were taking a share of the "cut" before the films had left the studios. Their share is still big, but not so big.

For in cutting down costs, the Americans did not go very far. Even in the worst years of the slump, films were costing £40,000 on the average, and some were made which cost over £100,000, a figure not far short of the biggest sums spent here during the boom. When we recall that Hecht and MacArthur made *Crime Without Passion* with a miserable little sum which they begged from Paramount, and when we reflect that many people, including Robert Flaherty, tell us quite soberly that there is no technical reason why first-class films should not be made nowadays in people's lobbies and sitting-rooms, we see that economy could have been carried much further without impairing quality. But we may remind ourselves that production chiefs could scarcely be expected to give the game away by making any very spectacular reduction in their own expenditure, and that in any case economy, especially in America, will always be accompanied by a fear of losing "face."

Anyhow, the American film people did cut their costs pretty considerably. But at the same time they set themselves to improve quality. They saw quite clearly that films would have to be better, more individual, more exciting, more appealing, more amusing, generally "more so." They did their best to break themselves of the sterilising habit of repeating previous successes and borrowing themes, titles and backgrounds from earlier films. They went out after new types of settings for the old stories the public loves so well, tightened up and speeded up action and dialogue, and generally produced a better article.

The exhibition system required strict rationalisation. The big corporations owned chains of theatres, hundreds and even thousands in one chain, and found that to feed them they had to make more films than the sadly depleted audiences of a slump period could pay for. They weeded out the worst of the theatres by closing them down to cut their losses, and further lessened their distribution responsibilities by giving many of the better ones back to the local owners from whom they had bought them in the first place. This process of retrenchment and devolution was the logical reverse of the expansion which had previously taken place. It transferred their distribution worries to local interests, which presumably were glad to take theatres back at prices lower than they had sold them for, and looked forward to the recovery which has since, in great measure, rewarded them.

## America weathered her storm

Thus Hollywood and New York fought against the slump during 1932 and 1933, to such effect that by 1936 all the bigger American corporations were in a sound financial position, and even those which had been hardest hit—Paramount and R.K.O.—were firmly on their feet. General trade recovery helped, of course, but the film people can congratulate themselves on their courage and confidence and on the firm measures that brought them through the storm.

So let our British chiefs take heart. Let them draw what analogies they can, between the position in America five years ago and the position in Britain to-day. Let them take what measures they think fit to reform their finances. But in looking forward, let them remember their past achievements in film-making. The Americans could always produce good pictures, but cannot England say the same thing? Critics of British films are too often unfair—they compare Hollywood's best with Britain's worst, forgetting that we produce a lot of good stuff, and Hollywood a lot of trash. Let us look at Britain's best, and compare it with Hollywood's.

For them, we can name *Modern Times*, *Cavalcade*, *Louis Pasteur*, *Green Pastures*; many others suggest themselves, films with a great and wise appeal to general human sentiment, as successful with simple audiences as with the most sophisticated; indeed, carefully calculated to have this broad appeal, as Thalberg explained to me when I discussed the matter with him. For England, we can name *Henry VIII*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *The 39 Steps*, *Evergreen*, *The Good Companions*, *Friday the Thirteenth*, *The Ghost Goes West*, *Rembrandt*, *Things to Come*, *Fire Over England*, *Farewell Again*, *The Great Barrier*. Let us remember the immense success here and in America of Jessie Matthew's light-winged, happy art. Let us remember Laughton's triumphs, let us not forget even Will Hay's school and Gracie Field's personality, both unique in the world.

The realist group, in any review which takes account of potentialities, would be mentioned first. Who knows what influence they are to exert on the future of film?

In comparing British with American films we must bear two things in mind. The first is America's thirty years' start. Thirty years of film history is probably equivalent to something like 3,000 years of general history. The other thing is America's huge home market, and the still greater world-market she built up in her years of expansion. Starting thirty years late, when the British market was already flooded with American films, the British film industry has done wonders in producing films comparable with America's best. So I should think that in spite of present storms we may forecast good weather for British films.


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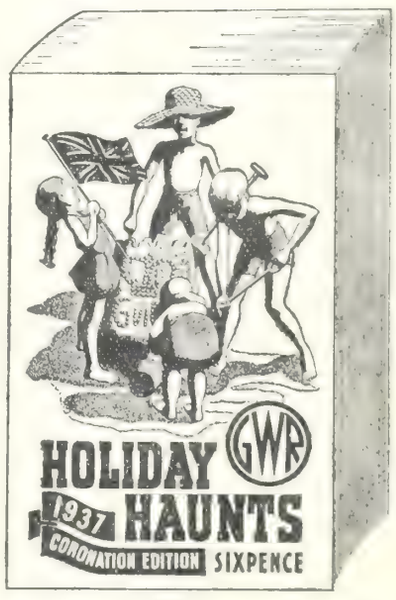


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by
Thomas Sugrue

# BRINGING THE WORLD

THE newsreels have used the only new art form which has appeared in the world for several ages in a practical way. They have accepted the motion-picture camera as an eliminator of space, as a means of teleportation, whereby there is catapulted to any designated place any part or portion of the earth and the events transpiring thereon. They have set before the cinema audiences of the world the world itself—realistic, brutally curt, uncomfortably detailed. Through them the movie audiences of the world have been released from a dream world, a captivity of the eye as torturesome to the curious as was the chained agony of Prometheus.

The effect of this magical transportation of earth and flesh has been, and is, incalculable. The generation which has grown up with automobiles, radios, and airplanes has also grown up with newsreels. This generation, which is accustomed to travel over land at sixty miles an hour and through the air at two hundred miles an hour, and which accepts as a commonplace the voice of a man speaking to it from a distance of a thousand miles, has not considered as remarkable the fact that it can see with its own eyes, while sitting in its neighbourhood theatre, events that transpired in the far places of the world only a few days before. This practical clairvoyance in time and space, with which mystics have wrestled for thousands of years, is not considered a phenomenon by Americans.

Foreigners think differently. In London there are twenty newsreel theatres—cinema houses devoted exclusively to the exhibition of pictorial news. In Paris there are ten, and every small European city has at least one. In the whole of the United States there are six: three in New York, one in Newark, one in Philadelphia, and one at North Station in Boston. The best customers of these half-dozen pioneers are foreigners, especially Japanese and Chinese. The Oriental thrills when a faraway place or a great man is brought before him.

The American is apathetic; it is for him that the newsreels have injected comedy, novelties, features, and the expert filming of sports events. History either bores or frightens him. He prefers the feature picture, which pacifies him with illusions of beauty and provides him with a vicarious outlet for his appetites and his dreams of beauty and grandeur. The astounding circulation figures of the newsreels are therefore misleading. They are not the result of voluntary attention; you get the newsreels whether you like it or not, while you are waiting for the stage show or the feature. Even so, their effect has been great, incalculably great.

The makers of newsreels have been able to exist and grow healthy on narcissism. Exhibitors have never cared a tinker's dam about the reels, and they argued against their inception in 1910, on the basis that the news would be too old by the time they got it to their screens. For a while the reels were given away, and they persisted only because something had to be shown to fill the gap between showings of the feature. Figuratively, an emancipation of the mind was rammed down the throats of Americans. Now they know what the world looks like beyond the horizon, and how Mussolini and Hitler and Gandhi, and the Duke of Windsor walk, talk, swim, laugh, and squint. History, because of the newsreels, can never again be what it had been since Herodotus—a romanticised glorification of commonplaces. The past cannot be more glorious or heroic than the present. The newsreel record lies in its morgue, ready to leap out and reveal the past as something as dull, ordinary, and prosaic as the things of the present. Had Napoleon and John L. Sullivan been exposed to the newsreel they would never have become the demigods of militarism and pugilism. Napoleon would be preserved for visual inspection as a megalomaniacal punk, and the Boston Strong Boy would be a ridiculously moustached blacksmith turned bludgeoner of humans. When Pathé released its twenty-fifth anniversary reel in 1935, Wilson, Taft, the first Roosevelt, and a host of other figures who are heading toward Olympus in the public mind were suddenly exposed as ordinary men in rather silly-looking clothes. The grinning newsreel cameraman, hunting ridiculous angles with savage glee, kills gods of the future with his picture gun.

In recent years the great men of the world—proving their greatness—have recognised this danger, and are more circumspect and restrained before the camera. They dare not refuse to be filmed, so they make the best of it by co-operating with the cameraman and acting for him. At the last inauguration, President Roosevelt literally toed a chalk line for the boys, and stayed within a small square marked out for him by the cameramen, who were on a tower fifty feet away with their machines focused on the square. The tower cost the newsreels $2,000 to construct. In return for co-operation the great men are spared the cameraman's satire, but the camera itself is a satirist. Its realism is subtle and cruel. It can be tipped to a flattering angle, but its lens will not delete a single detail.

Should the newsreels suddenly announce that, since they have never been appreciated and do not make money and are given away as premiums with Garbo and Gable and Crawford, they have

decided to give up the ghost and retire, there would probably be quite a squawk. There has been a growing appreciation of them on the part of intelligent people, especially since the advent of sound, and the companies themselves have laboured to make reels that grow less tiresome and repetitious, more interesting and informative, week by week. And the average American, pampered almost to extinction, would be inclined to cry a little, much as he would weep if his fresh grapefruit in midwinter were taken away from him.

But the newsreels are not apt to make any such announcement. Their makers are joyous in their creation, and they represent a prodigious investment. They are still the ill-used stepchildren of Hollywood's household, distributed as lollipops along with the supersmash productions of their owners, but they comprise an amazing and ingenious system of world news coverage which dwarfs everything of its kind except the great press associations. They represent an investment in camera and sound equipment which cannot be estimated; they consume film as fire consumes tinder; they envelop the lives of more than 2,000 photographers from Bangor to Benares. They examine a quarter of a million feet of film negative a week; and they work like madmen to present in 10,000 feet a panorama of civilisation's epic attempt to tie itself into an inextricable knot.

# TO THE WORLD

The newsreel history is consistent with its role of unappreciated stepchild of the movies. It had a rocky start. Its first adventure was almost its last, and it went out to conquer the world with faith alone. There was little blessing from the multitude, and no cheers.

In 1906 a short, stocky young man named Leon Franconi stood among the ruins of San Francisco and contemplated the effacement of his family's home and fortune, both done in by the great fire. He decided to go south in search of a better fate, and travelled to Los Angeles, where he joined the firm of Pathé Frères, French motion-picture producers, who had established a branch firm in Hollywood. Young Franconi became confidential interpreter for Charles Pathé, one of the brothers, and worked as general practitioner in the business and executive offices of the company. In 1909, inspired by the sight of a film of Taft's inauguration, he suggested to his employer that a magazine of the screen be founded by the company, to record and present news events to the audiences. Charles Pathé thought it over, went to Paris, and tried it out on the French; and in 1910, eight months later, cabled Franconi to go ahead in America.

He made an effort to get news when he could, and when fire broke out in Galveston, Texas, he hired a locomotive and caboose in order to send a cameraman from New Orleans in time to get the conflagration at its height. It cost him $500, but the cameramen got enough negative to supply all the European offices of Pathé, and the expenditure was condoned. One of his cameramen happened to be in a hotel in St. Augustine, Florida, when the fire of 1912 broke out there, and that made a good picture. Franconi sent cameramen to cover the strike in Colorado, at Trinidad, and a complete riot was photographed. That was the first instance of heroism on the part of cameramen. One of them was nearly killed.

Franconi had the field to himself up until 1912, when competition sprang up in the shape of Hearst and Universal. Paramount started its reel in 1916, and Fox came in right after the Armistice. These are the Big Five of this day, which finds Franconi living in White Plains, New York, in semi-retirement, quite pleased with what happened to his idea.

The newsreel developed slowly during the silent days, getting better as cameras improved and building up a system of coverage which gradually blanketed the world. The legend of the daring cameraman arose, and parades and conventions were gradually eliminated as more spot news was covered. There were still too many battleship parades and Bavarian peasant dances to suit the discriminating, but there was nothing much that could be done about it. To this day battleships make beautiful pictures, and the newsreel depends on beautiful pictures for its success. Thrilling as divorces and murders are, they are hopeless pictorially. To the newsreels it is a matter of no picture, no story.

Sound changed the newsreels as much as it changed feature pictures, and, strangely enough, the newsreels were chosen by destiny to prove the efficacy of the "talkies." The first sound feature film, *The Jazz Singer*, was a success, but after that the feature pictures in sound were pretty bad, and the new device looked like a failure. Then, suddenly, Fox came out with a newsreel that not only had sound, but had it *on the film*, rather than on records. This was a gadget developed by Courtland Smith, now president of Pathé News. Pretty soon the Fox reel was in such demand that four different editions of it—reels, A, B, C, and D—were being produced a week. The reel did a hundred-thousand-dollar-a-week business, the first, last, and only time a newsreel ever climbed into such a financial bracket, and Smith found himself making speeches to the sceptical in favour of sound film. In the flush of success he founded the first newsreel theatre, the Embassy, in New York.

The Fox-Case system of film recording was going like a house afire, but the Fox Company got into a magnificent mess; William Fox lost out in his fight for control, and Smith went to Pathé. The Fox Reel, christened the Fox Movietone News, went on to become the largest in organisation and extent. It has a European Movietone News, a British Movietone News, and separate reels for every country, including Australia and New Zealand. Only Russia is excepted. The foreign extension was plotted and founded by Truman Talley, now general manager and producer of the American reel. Talley has stamped his personality on the Fox reel much as Smith has reflected himself in the Pathé reel.

Movietone is distinguished from its competitors by its high degree of departmentalisation; every subject has a special commentator and a name for the department. Pathé puts a separate title on sports, but believes with the others that news is haphazard and that a reel must be kept open for spot news, which seldom lends itself to categories. Mike Clofine, the Hearst reel boss, makes a fetish of this freedom, as does Paramount. The latter goes farther, refusing to let a personality get into the make-up of the reel. It uses a board of three editors: A. J. Richard, editor; William P. Montague, assignment editor; William Park, make-up editor. It doesn't identify its commentators, using six or eight and choosing a voice to fit the story.

Universal, dubbed "The Five-Cent Weekly" by the other reels because it has a smaller staff and only four sound outfits, can afford to smirk at such badinage. It decided not to invest in expensive sound equipment in the early days when an outfit weighed 1,400 pounds and the amplifier was attached to a truck. Instead, it hired a commentator, Graham McNamee, and used his voice with music and manufactured sound. This was forethought to the point of prophecy, for natural sound wore off as a novelty and the other reels turned to commentators, music, and finally, as now, a mixture of all three. Universal gets the palm for pioneering. It is run efficiently by Charles Ford, who once founded a local reel for the Chicago *Daily News*. With less money Ford often gets better pictures than his competitors, though

he cannot cope with such scoops as Pathé's exclusive contract with the Dionne Quintuplets, or the blanket coverage of Movietone.

*The March of Time*, which is a magazine of the screen, costs an exhibitor more than a newsreel, though it isn't the smash hit that was predicted. It has a little trouble now and then with reenactments of news. Some local Nazis raised a rumpus about a German sequence, and people often refuse either to act themselves or to sanction a double. The reel is careful not to be libellous, and that often detracts from its sting.

Sound slowed up the reels for a while because the novelty of natural noises and a commentator's voice was played up. Fewer stories were used in a reel, in order that the audience could hear more about each. As the novelty wore off, things were speeded up, and nowadays an average reel of ten minutes' duration contains between nine and thirteen subjects, with music, natural sound, and the comment artistically mixed, each coming out for a somersault at the proper time. The commentators have dwindled in importance. They do not write what they say, anyhow, and a suitable voice is all that is needed. In the newsreel offices they are known as "talk-strippers," which indicates the social flop they have taken. There has been a financial flop along with it; they no longer receive fabulous salaries.

The newsreels operate exactly like newspapers, with a news desk and an editor who assigns stories. Each company has a staff of cameramen, backed up by an international army of freelances

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**Some of the subjects :**
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## *"Bringing the World to the World"* (*contd*).

—usually local photographers with their own cameras. There are only about five hundred staff men, averaging one hundred for each company —Fox a little more, Universal less. The freelances are paid for footage.

Equipment has been reduced in size, until now it weighs, camera and sound together, only 150 pounds, with most of the weight in the tripod on which the camera rests. The technicians hope to reduce the whole thing to a pack which one man can carry, but they dare not as yet lighten the tripod, for the success of a picture depends on its rigidity, and a light tripod would probably do more harm than good. Each man has a small automatic camera for close work, and telescopic lenses are in general use, making it possible to get close-ups.

The editors live in daily horror of scratches on the film, the result of either a dirty "gate" on the camera or faulty work in developing. Unlike a newspaper, which can rewrite a story, the newsreel can do nothing with a bad film. They don't get much of it, for the cameramen are highly skilled, but they could do with some more imagination on the part of cameramen, because new angles are constantly necessary. It may be a brand-new fire or flood, but it is apt to look just like the last one, and the eyes remember scenes better than the mind remembers facts. Audiences yawn, and remember last year's conflagration, which looked the same. Editors would like to see young college men with intelligence and imagination get into the newsreel cameramen's field, but somehow, like the church, it doesn't attract them nowadays.

The cameramen send all of their negatives to the central offices—all of which are in New York —by plane whenever possible. (The newsreels are the best customers of the airways, using planes to send negative, to distribute prints and to take pictures.) There the film is examined, projected, cut, and pasted together. The natural sound is already on it, and this is mixed with music wherever music is desired. Meanwhile, the editors get to work on the comment, and when this is ready the talk-stripper goes into a projection room and does his work. He sits at a table with a microphone and script, while the film is projected before him. His voice is piped to a mixing machine, where it joins the other sounds, which are toned down when he is speaking. Meanwhile, titles come from the print shop, and such artistic things as dissolves, wipeouts and double exposures are added—whenever the editor thinks necessary.

All of this is done in a single day, a day often lasting from noon until eight or nine o'clock the next morning. All reels make up on Monday and Wednesday, to catch the changes in programme at theatres all over the country, and the prints are shipped by aeroplane and fast trains. The prints, incidentally, are costly, and were it not necessary to make so many—four or five hundred, one for each of the reels' first-run houses—the reels would make money.

All the reels except Universal are distributed through their parent companies to the theatre chains controlled by these companies. RKO distributes Pathé, the Hearst reel goes through M-G-M, the Paramount and Fox companies handle their own reels. Universal, having no hookup with a chain, gets most of the independent houses, though all the reels sell to independents. Large movie houses, like the Radio City Music Hall in New York buy two or three reels, cut out duplications, and paste the remainders together to be shown as the theatre's own newsreel. The newsreel theatres also cut out duplications and re-edit the reels.

The life of a reel is four weeks. After that, even the cheapest houses won't take it, and the prints are sold for scrap film, the silver being salvageable.

The reels make little or no money, since they operate on a budget handed down by the parent company, and the editors are not inclined to sacrifice their coverage for a few pennies. If they did, the profits would probably be taken away from them and the budget cut for the next year, anyhow. They concentrate on getting good coverage, good pictures, and fast delivery. There is little or no editorialising, since the screens belong to the exhibitors, who are of all creeds, politics, and races. A notable exception to this occurred in California in 1934, when Upton Sinclair ran for governor on his EPIC programme. Certain newsreels showed tramps and bums pouring into the state on freight trains, expressing their determination to go to California and live off the government if Sinclair won. The scenes were staged, if not actually faked, and I, seeing them in San Francisco and Los Angeles theatres that summer, thought the freedom of the reels had come to an end. Nothing like it has happened since.

Reels of football games, filmed almost in entirety (when edited and trimmed to a hundred feet they are more lucid and thrilling than the actual encounter) are not released to coaches until the season is over. They are valuable for scouting, and coaches of teams on the participants' schedules used to buy prints of the full footage. Gruesome scenes are usually eliminated now, because audience reaction is bad. One company was forced to defend itself—successfully it turned out—against a suit by a woman who said that the sight of Dillinger on a slab brought on an abortion.

The newsreel morgues are as valuable as newspaper morgues, and are used more and more to give background to a story or a person of importance who has died or has been elevated in position. You never can tell what you have in the morgue. During the crisis over the English crown, Fox discovered it had a reel of King Edward and Mrs. Simpson in bathing. It had been taken some time before as a human-interest story of the King, and the cameramen didn't even know who the lady was when he made the film. Nor did he bother to find out. Pathé naturally has the best morgue historically, but Fox has priceless shots, made when sound was a novelty, of famous people from George Bernard Shaw to Mussolini and Hitler. At this time they were all eager to try the new contrivance, and they unwittingly gave themselves to posterity as ordinary men, saying ordinary things.

Of all the things which a newsreel editor hates, war is first. It is expensive, it is dangerous for the cameramen, and it seldom if ever produces pictures worth looking at. Not since the days of the Mexican fighting in 1916 have there been good war pictures. Then, Pancho Villa is supposed to have sold the motion-picture rights to his private war for $25,000 and fought several of his battles on location. After that, in every fracas, government censorship marred the chance for action pictures. In the World War the newsreel men weren't allowed to shoot at all; army photographers did the work for propaganda purposes, and the only thrilling thing was Pathé's shot of an Austrian cruiser torpedoed and sunk by an Italian submarine.

The Ethiopian War was a dud, except for Paramount's pictures of the sack of Addis Ababa and Movietone's reel of the bombing of Dessye. The Spanish Revolution has also failed to go off, pictorially, and has been very dangerous for the cameraman. Floods, though expensive, are much easier to handle, and this year the editors had their men on the scene weeks before there was anything to shoot—waiting for the water to rise.

(*Continued on page* 19)

## *Coronation Newsreels*

*May 12th was a great opportunity for the British newsreels. Privileged entry into the sacred precincts of Westminster Abbey . . . the old-time ceremonial revealed for the first time to the common gaze . . . princes, prelates and the great people from overseas . . . the men who to-day hold the British Empire together, gathered brilliantly for this symbolic occasion . . . the people of Britain in their millions . . . from town and country, all over . . . working people . . . feeling the sudden sun gladly across their faces after a night in the streets. What have the newsreels made of it? What have they seen through their giant camera batteries, their colour systems, their two-hundredweight lenses?*

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## *"Bringing the World to the World"* (*contd.*)

Some of the greatest newsreel pictures are accidental. A camera is trained on a racing automobile or a racing aeroplane, and there is a crack-up. When Francesco De Pinedo took off for a transatlantic flight at Floyd Bennett Field, and failed to get into the air, his plane burst into flames, and the newsreel cameras recorded his involuntary cremation. One of the greatest newsreel films ever made was the burning of the *Morro Castle*, which recorded the panic and death of passengers as they fell into the furnace of the ship or drowned in the water.

For posterity, the newsreel has President McKinley, leaving office after his first term (Universal bought it from Vitagraph, whose photographer, thrilled and frightened, turned his crank too fast and made a slow-motion picture); Czar Nicholas reviewing his troops in 1914; King George and the Kaiser on horseback, reviewing troops together; Taft making his inaugural address in a snowstorm; Teddy Roosevelt hunting in Africa; Wilson inaugurating the use of automobiles at inaugurations; soldiers of all nations going to fight in the World War; Foch, Pétain, Pershing, Hindenburg, Haig, Clemenceau, Poincaré, Lloyd George, and the Peace Conference in general; the Wright Brothers at Kittyhawk: Byrd flying over both poles; Lindbergh in Paris; Hauptmann on the witness stand; Dillinger on a slab; Jack Johnson, Jim Jeffries, Tilden, Dempsey, Nurmi, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, and countless other figures of earth, and the earth on which they trod—the earth of floods, fires, panics, earthquakes, volcanoes, tidal waves, tornadoes, and parades, parades, parades.

### "Spigotty Andy"

The cameraman has his own saga, a story of heroism, ingenuity, and a sense of humour. With a bitter understanding of the unappreciated place which his work has in the minds of movie addicts, he has enshrined a symbolic figure as the cameraman's place in history, "Spigotty Andy."

Spigotty Andy was a Chilean who burned with desire to be a newsreel cameraman. For years he sent long letters, half Spanish, half English, to the Paramount editors in New York, outlining a wonderful and always unusable story which he was all ready to shoot as soon as an advance of raw film arrived from Paramount. Then a revolution broke out in Chile, and Paramount cabled Andy that he could go ahead. He was on the spot. This was his chance.

He didn't answer the cable, or another one which was sent, and no film came from him. They found out why. He had gone with the government troops to a hill at the outskirts of the city, put a press card in his hat, and waited by his camera.

When the attack came the government troops fled, but Andy, blissfully sure that a cameraman is immune, cranked away as the rebels advanced. They found him the next day, his hand still gripping the crank of his shattered machine, dead—quite dead, as the English say. So he was enshrined as a hero, though no foot of his film was ever screened. Newsreel men like that story. It seems to mean something to them, something ironic and satisfying, like the note which accompanied Pierre Luck's first films of the Spanish Revolution, sent to Fox Movietone: "If you find on developing that the negative quality is not up to standard, please forgive me, and take into consideration that a good deal of it was shot under danger of life." A guy is apt to get nervous.

# Diary of the Coronation Reels

May 10th.—Newsreel editors are downhearted, sad-faced, and without hope.

May 11th.—They smile faintly, still look suspicious, shake their heads.

May 12th.

9 a.m. Their eyes fill with tears.

11.30 a.m. They sit down and weep. For the rest of the joyous day nothing will console them.

10 p.m. Britain's newsreel editors are shouting to the skies, jumping on cutting benches, burning the wires with frantic congratulations to each other.

The reason for so much fluctuation on the dial:

Two days before the Coronation, final camera tests were made in the Abbey, for the filming of the Coronation Service. At the last moment, the Earl Marshal had found room for all five reels and had given greatly increased facilities to the cameramen. All five were to exchange "rota prints." (See page 30).

At almost every stage the King and Queen would be within range of at least three cameras. In newsreel jargon, the "coverage" was 100 per cent. But . . . . The camera tests were through—the negatives had hardly any picture on them. After months of planning, there still was not enough light in the Abbey, and nothing could be done about it. The Earl Marshal would not permit more lighting, for fear of glare in royal eyes.

The Coronation-eve smile was caused by the arrival from America of a carefully sealed package containing a few thousand feet of specially prepared "hyper-sensitised" film—claimed to be 50 per cent faster than anything that had ever been loaded into a British camera. But newsreel editors weren't taking too much for granted. Still, if to-morrow would only dawn a brilliant sunny day!

But in the morning it was sunny only in tiny patches, and soon the clouds rolled across, and the grey smoke beat down. By midday, as the Abbey Service began to echo round the pillars, and dull became almost winter-dark, the editors put on their black ties.

But in the evening, as the negatives rolled off the developing machines, rumours began to spread. Rumours became certainties, certainties became facts, and the wild story broke. The "hyper-sensitised stock" had worked a miracle. Not only was there a printable picture on the negative, the most famous church in the world had been turned into a film studio, had produced pictures of semi-studio quality. The pattern on the Queen's train was there in all its detail. Every inscription on the ecclesiastical copes, almost the writing on the King's oath sheet!

The five reels had between them shot about 10,000 feet of film. Each had recorded the sound from the broadcast. There followed, in five cutting rooms, almost twenty hours of continuous editing, making sense out of the world's most complicated ceremony. And at last the newsreels released to the world the most staggeringly dramatic, the most amazing, newsreel story in the history of screen reporting.

The fact of taking part in a ceremony that for a thousand years has never been seen by more than a handful of people, may have something to do with the surprising impact of the story. Nothing on the screen has ever been quite so 'otherworldly' as this, so far removed from reality. It has the far-off 'dream fantasy' of a story by Fiona Macleod, some of the grace of a dance by Pavlova, yet coupled with the grotesque barbarity of L'Après Midi d'un Faune. The world will like it and loathe it. But the world will have nothing but admiration for the actors who played their parts with such skill, in a play that was not of their writing.

With all reels showing the same pictures, and the production sequence bound to narrow limits, there is little to choose between the reels. General opinion seems to send Pathé past the post first, with slick production by Fred Watts, and an able commentary.

R. E.

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# REVIEW OF REVIEWS Edited by H. E. Blyth

## *Review of the Month*

**LOST HORIZON.** (Frank Capra—Columbia). Ronald Colman, Jane Wyatt, Edward Everett Horton, Margo, H. B. Warner.

In discussing this as a film with an idea, I think I am following the wish of the producers. Publicity has emphasised that this film is regarded by themselves as their masterpiece; that it contains "a great message." As a piece of entertainment, as a sample of cinema virtuosity, I will agree that it is something of a masterpiece. The early section, from the excited opening scene to the crashing of the plane, comprises in itself a story-telling sequence that could scarcely be bettered as a build-up of suspense. There are only a few flaws, the major one being the introduction of Edward Everett Horton, in a needless attempt at comic relief. There are masterpiece-views in the mountain photography.

But to get to the message: *Lost Horizon* is a masterpiece of inspirational evasion. It would hardly seem fair to take romantic entertainment so seriously, were it not so pretentiously portentous. And it is in this innocent mask of romance and escape that a certain danger lies. Let us set down the by now familiar basic idea of *Lost Horizon*; An ageless head lama, once a Christian missionary, is gathering the culture of the world: books, art treasures, scientific knowledge, storing it away in the buildings of his lamasery accessible only by a hidden pass among the mountains of Tibet. For he sees mankind rushing to a war of utter destruction. He believes that his little settlement will be overlooked in this war, and thus, the best of mankind's culture and civilisation will have been preserved.

The first danger in this "inspirational" message is that it contains a subtly pervasive defeatism. The film induces the audience to accept the idea that mankind is doomed; a war of annihilation is inevitable. Secondly, it induces the hopeless attitude that hope lies only in some fantastic mode of escape, some Noah's Ark in the Tibetan wilds. This romanticism was harmless in a novel, as the thing was frankly a tale; but given the believableness of a motion picture, the romantic idea begins to function a little too strongly.

Now let us examine the Utopian system of economy practised by the lamas. First, there is a medieval paternalism about the place. The humble dwellings in the valley are dominated by the magnificent, modernistic-baronial palaces of the lamas. While every modern luxury is present in the palaces of the lamas, it is apparent that the valley-folk live in an almost primitive state. Everybody smiles, we are told, because everybody has everything he wants. There is an abundance of all necessities. And further, there is gold. The lamasery is able to buy and store away the treasures of the world by the simple expedient of lifting chunks of gold from the mountain-side. It is presumed that in the universal Utopia envisioned in the regeneration of the world, a similar favourable balance of exchange will exist in all localities.

This, then, is the great "Message." Let us be content with things as they are, for we can't avoid the great world catastrophe that is coming. After we are annihilated, a new race will grow up in our place, engendered by Mr. Ronald Colman and Jane Wyatt, everybody will happily do what the old lamas on the hill tell them to do, there will be gold on every hillside, and everybody will remain youthful forever, and the air will be filled with music from flutes on the tails of pigeons. If you ask me, it's molasses, sickening if taken in too great quantity. —Meyer Levin, *Esquire*

**"Pépé le Moko"**

The intellectuals won't like *Lost Horizon* because it's so simple. The intellectuals are deliberately complex. They're churning round and round in their own troubles. They make their own chains, their own problems, their own heartaches. If a little girl loves her father, they say it's sex. If one man does something friendly for another, they say it's sex. Frankly, I don't care much what they say, because they're not real people, and I don't believe in them. If I made *Lost Horizon* again to-day, I shouldn't change a thing. Technically, of course, it should have ended on that toast in the club. We made it that way, and tried it out in Hollywood, but the audience didn't like it. They wanted to be sure that Robert Conway got back to his Utopia. And I don't blame them. The audiences love the lama's speeches. They didn't like the same sort of thing in the Wells picture, *Things to Come*, because it doesn't give them any answer to their problems. It is left with a question mark at the end, nothing to substitute for the bombs and gas and killing. It isn't simple enough. All the great men, from Demosthenes downwards, have been simple. The lama's speeches, although they may seem silly to the highbrows, are a fairly sound boiling down of the whole Christian doctrine. They will be doing pretty well if they just take home those two words, *Be Kind.*

—Frank Capra, *interviewed by C. A. Lejeune*

**PÉPÉ LE MOKO.** (Julien Duvivier—French.) Jean Gabin, Mireille Balin, Lucas Gridoux.

In my first burst of enthusiasm, I would have said that *Pépé Le Moko* is the most brilliant film ever produced in a French studio. Perhaps it is not quite as good as that, but it is enormously, and horribly, memorable. It is a story of the underworld of Algiers, the Casbah—the native quarter high up on a hill, with its winding streets and terraces descending to the sea. Here the outlaws live, safe from the police as long as they do not descend to the town below. The king of them all is a youngish man, a gambler and a lover, Pépé Le Moko. The French police want Pépé. Will they lure him down into the town? Again and again they try. At last a woman gets him. He is caught and kills himself with a penknife. The woman, her job done, sails away. There is nothing complex in the entire picture. The direction is masterly; the sound and camera-work creative; the acting just about as well done as screen acting can be. This is something that you must see.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

Perhaps there have been pictures as exciting on the "thriller" level as this before, but I cannot remember one which has succeeded so admirably in raising the thriller to poetic level. *Winterset* seems a little jejeune and obvious and literary beside it. *Fury*, perhaps, is its equal. Acting and direction are both superb. This is one of the most exciting and moving films I can remember seeing.

—Graham Greene, *The Spectator*

**THE MAN IN POSSESSION.** (W. S. Van Dyke—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
Jean Harlow, Robert Taylor, Reginald Owen, E. E. Clive, Una O'Connor.

This is a smooth and well-made film which has had abundance of care and craft expended on it, and which just amounts to hardly anything at all because Miss Jean Harlow is absurdly miscast. Crystal Wetherby hopes to be married by a supposedly rich man who imagines she is herself enormously rich. The rich man's scapegrace brother, Raymond, intervenes, discovers that the lady is a prey to writs and bailiffs, and becomes her handsome unmanageable butler. This part, too, may be said to roar out for Mr. Robert Montgomery, but is given to the comparatively amateurish Mr. Robert Taylor. It is not the fault of Miss Harlow that she is short instead of commanding, and merely peevish when she should be disdainful, though perhaps she might learn to make her naked shoulders less petulant. Miss Harlow, in short, slouches sullenly through what ought to be high comedy as if she did not care a rap for it, and wears some slashed black velvet gowns as if she liked them no better than the story.

—James Agate, *The Tatler*

The conspiracy to provide a spell of light and amusing entertainment succeeds. Pace is brisk and humour plentiful, and the ingenious situations are adroitly handled. Jean Harlow here returns to a co-starring partnership. It was an inspiration to team her with Robert Taylor. Tall and handsome, both of them, they provide also the contrast between blonde beauty and dark-haired masculinity. Jean Harlow's performance is well-nigh flawless, whether in disdainful mood, tempestuous anger, or yielding grace. Robert Taylor rapidly develops as an actor. He might easily have remained dependent on his good looks for a high salary. Evidently he has greater ambitions. Opposite Garbo in *Camille* he was a little out of his depth, but came through creditably. His work always shows sincerity; when not so severely tested he has so much acting ability that I am inclined to think that his fan mail would not be much smaller even if he were not blessed with that Apollo-like countenance.

—Sydney W. Carroll, *The Sunday Times*

**GLAMOROUS NIGHT.** (Brian Desmond Hurst—Associated British.)
Mary Ellis, Otto Kruger, Victor Jory, Barry Mackay.

*Glamorous Night* is about a Ruritanian King who loves a gipsy, and a scheming Prime Minister, who exiles the royal mistress, makes himself dictator and is about to murder the king when the gipsy enters the capital at the head of her people. The plot belongs to the age of *The Bing Boys* and *The Maid of the Mountains;* one waits for jokes about blighty, although Mr. Novello has tried to bring it up to date with arch references to coloured shirts. It is about as bogus as a film could be, but it is well photographed by Wagner, Lang's ace cameraman in the old Ufa days, and quite well directed by Mr. Brian Desmond Hurst. It has the advantage of Miss Mary Ellis's daemonic good looks, and Mr. Hurst deserves some credit for never once taking Miss Ellis's mouth in a close-up as she sings Mr. Novello's peculiarly flat songs.

—Graham Greene, *The Spectator*

The film version of *Glamorous Night*, Ivor Novello's great Drury Lane success, proved disappointing in almost every respect except for the welcome reappearance of Mary Ellis and Trefor Jones in their original parts, and for Mr. Novello's music, as enchanting as ever. I disliked Otto Kruger as the King; as for the gentleman who played the villain, his method of masticating his words rather than speaking them threw me into a despondency from which I have not yet recovered.

—Sydney W. Carroll, *The Sunday Times*

**STOWAWAY.** (William A. Seiter—20th Century—Fox.)
Shirley Temple, Robert Young, Alice Faye, Arthur Treacher.

I surrender, I am abashed and disarmed and open-mouthed before the twentieth century (era, not studio) miracle, Shirley Temple. There is a moment in this latest film when she sings a ditty and then renders it in wicked mimicry of Jolson, Cantor and Astaire and Rogers. Time may march on as it will, but it will be hard-pressed to eclipse a seven-year old girl imitating a famous dance-team single-handed. By the way, this Faye girl, if you can spare a thought from the Temple, is terrific. She has looks of the Harlow sort, with a gentler manner, and is, as you ought to know by now, the best girl crooner in the business.

—Stephen Watts, *The Sunday Express*

Film-fans are Herodian in their desires: they want a fresh Massacre of Innocents. I have never seen Miss Temple, and I cannot, therefore, say how far the demand for her demise is justified ; but I feel suspicious of the people who proclaim their abhorrence of child actors and actresses. I doubt if they like children anywhere, and I am certain that they have all the instincts of the more suppressive pedagogues, the sort who, like the father of Francis Place, never met a child without hitting it. If ever I see Miss Temple I fully expect to find her entirely charming. How can this child have seized so firmly the favour of millions of film-fans if she is fit only to be incinerated? I would much rather roast alive the people who yap at her. I have seen some of these people, and I do not like the look of them. They are the sort that flog infants for their own, that is to say, the floggers', good.

—St. John Ervine, *The Sunday Observer*

*Critical Summary.*

'And even the ranks of Tuscany
Could scarce forbear to cheer.'

**QUALITY STREET.** (George Stevens—RKO Radio.)
Katharine Hepburn, Franchot Tone, Eric Blore, Bonita Granville.

*Quality Street* is strictly a self-propelled picture, tearing breathlessly, almost hysterically, through Barrie's quizzical account of a man-hunt, the deadliest man-hunt of all, in fact: that of a woman with spinsterhood staring her in the mirror, for the elusive and nebulously attractive quarry called a husband.

It was not so much the chase that upset us, for Sir James had made it pathetic and incredible and amusing and ironic by turns. But we were exhausted by the intensity of Miss Hepburn's concentration on it. Her Phoebe Throssel needs a neurologist far more than a husband. Such flutterings and jitterings and twitchings, such handwringings and mouth-quiverings, such runnings about and eyebrow-raisings have not been seen on a screen in many a moon. Surely Barrie had not imagined a Phoebe like this ; surely the dashing Captain Valentine Brown, seeking peace after the Napoleonic wars, could not have entered this matrimonial campaign with any degree of assurance.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

**"Her Phoebe Throssel needs a neurologist"**

## W.F.N. SELECTION

| | |
|---|---|
| *Pépé le Moko* | * * |
| *Lost Horizon* | * |
| *The Man in Possession* | * |

### *Other Films Covered*

*Glamorous Night*

*Stowaway*

*Quality Street*

*Lloyds of London*

*Crown and Glory*

*For You Alone*

*London Melody*

*That Girl from Paris*

*Burgtheater*

*Kimiko*

**"Crown and Glory"**

*Critical Summary.* (*Quality Street*)

It is becoming increasingly ironical that the film which is now most frequently recalled in connection with Katharine Hepburn should be *Morning Glory*. The critics have not been very complimentary about Miss Hepburn's more recent pictures.

**LLOYDS OF LONDON.** (Henry King—20th Century-Fox.)

Tyrone Power, Madeleine Carroll, Freddie Bartholomew, Guy Standing, Aubrey Smith.

It is not often that we find films of this calibre, and when we do I think we should let down our critical defences and admit that this is a really magnificent achievement. Once again Hollywood has made the sort of film which would have gained for the British film industry all the goodwill of Britain had it been made in Britain. This film, which is as good as *Cavalcade* or *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, is really magnificent stuff. It is very hard to believe that Horatio Nelson, in the stress of finding the French fleet, should have thought of having written to a pal he had not met for more than thirty years, but the story is so good that its improbabilities are of very little concern. If you do not like this film I simply cannot help it. It is a picture you ought to like, and you ought to agitate for the making of many more such films in Britain.

—Walter Webster, *The Sunday Pictorial*

The Union Jack in the last few years has been vigorously and with no little effect waved by Hollywood; now it is the turn of the White Ensign, and the only escape from embarrassment is to be found in the comfortable fact that the colours are faulty. The flag might well have been that of a nineteenth-century Ruritania, and apart from the monotonous repetition of the words "England," "Nelson," and "Lloyds," there was little or nothing to identify the scenes on the screen with the England of the Napoleonic wars. It is disheartening that the films, just when they seem on the verge of growing up, should every now and again relapse into the childish when they are faced with an adult subject. Childish is the correct word, for some of the scenes shown of the Battle of Trafalgar bear an unfortunate resemblance to a more than usually spirited production of the pirate-ship adventures in *Peter Pan*.

—*The Times*

*Critical Summary.*

The reference to *Bengal Lancer* in the first review probably provides the solution to this difference of opinion, for the film world can be divided into those who did and those who did not like this picture. To those who did, *Lloyds of London, The Charge of the Light Brigade* and other of Hollywood's English epics will appeal. You pay your money, and you take your choice.

**CROWN AND GLORY.** (Paramount Coronation Film.)

For most of its length this is unexceptional, made up of newsreel shots made familiar to us by the Jubilee films. The events of the abdication are tactfully skated over. But once having brought the present King to the throne the film turns itself into propaganda for re-armament.

Shots of battleships fill the screen. Britain realises, we are told, that to be fully armed is a guarantee against war. "Land of Hope and Glory" swells up on the sound-track. Massed shots of bombers, "Make thee mightier yet." More battleships. The Navy, we are told, has been whittled to the bone by Disarmament Conferences "betrayed by other nations."

The commentary during this sequence is tendentious in the extreme. There is hardly a sentence that would not be challenged by any opposition Member of Parliament, or, indeed, any impartial observer of affairs. I doubt whether many supporters of the Government would regard it as a fair and objective picture. The effect of this facile and swaggering rhetoric is to make the lines from "Richard II" which follow, sound false and artificial.

The point is whether it is good taste to introduce into a film dealing with the monarchy a statement of controversial current issues that will offend millions of citizens who feel nothing but loyalty and affection to the King and Royal Family. It smacks of exploiting the Coronation for a partisan purpose—which I personally find a nauseating proceeding.

—Frank Evans, *The Newcastle Evening Chronicle*

**FOR YOU ALONE.** (Robert Riskin—Columbia.)

Grace Moore, Cary Grant.

Everybody must at some time in his life have seen a Grace Moore picture; and if you have seen one of them, you've seen them all. There are, if you want to be scrupulous, two minute points of difference between this Moore film and its predecessors. The first is that Miss Moore sings a bit of low-down music in rather an engaging way; "Minnie the Moocher" is the selection. The second novelty is the introduction into the dialogue of three words which, I am willing to bet, have never before been spoken on a sound track. The words are "approbation," "Gauguin," and "sycophant." If you want to know how they are worked into the story, you must see *For You Alone*.

—Russell Maloney, *The New Yorker*

She is the opera star surrounded by sycophants, who longs to return to America but is prevented by passport difficulties. He is an artist who counts the world well lost while he can follow his own inclinations and indulge in rough-shod riding over sentiment which hides a loyal and gallant heart. They are married—it is purely a device to get the opera star back to New York—but romance steps in as the sycophants fade out. It may matter very little to you that when Mr. Grant goes out to buy a wedding present for his far from amiable wife he should come back with what he describes as a genuine Gauguin—and it looks like one, too: but it only shows that even Hollywood has an artistic temperament. The singing? I had almost forgotten it . . . But the numbers range from "Minnie the Moocher" to Schubert's "Serenade," which seems fair all round. Miss Moore wears "creations" that seemed to me, once or twice, abominable, but perhaps a male critic's view on such a matter ought to be kept to himself. Or had it?

—*The Birmingham Mail*

**LONDON MELODY.** (Herbert Wilcox—Herbert Wilcox Productions.)

Anna Neagle, Tullio Carminati, Robert Douglas, Horace Hodges.

You have seen the one about the distinguished official (soldier, sailor, business man—there are no ends to some script writers' resource) who takes the blame for his young rival's blunder, only to find that the girl really loved him all the time? Well, here it is again, but so well directed and so well acted that all but the very hard-boiled will find it agreeable entertainment. Miss Neagle, Little Orphan Anna, is charming as the girl who lives with pickpockets (without the slightest suggestion of impropriety) and makes a success as a cabaret singer; Tullio Carminati gives a polished performance as her benefactor; and Robert Douglas, the hero of *Our Fighting Navy*, is again effective as his rival—"the best dancer and tennis player in Shanghai," but a cad who doesn't quite play with a straight bat.

—Campbell Dixon, *The Daily Telegraph*

Possibly by the exertion of stronger will-power than mine, you can believe in a foreign diplomat chief in London who falls in love with a girl street dancer to a piano-organ. If not, you can still find interest and charm in the personalities. The production is handsome, but the people are without exception incredible, and the story the most bewildering rubbish. I may be hopelessly wrong in believing that these things matter; and if the picture is a huge success I shall not be at all surprised.

—P. L. Mannock, *The Daily Herald*

*Critical Summary.*

Mr. Herbert Wilcox has in the past handled Miss Anna Neagle with a shrewd understanding

## London Melody (cont.)

of the box-office. His stories may have been all too frequently bewildering rubbish, but they have also been frequently huge successes. *London Melody* is yet another film based on this safety-first policy. It remains to be seen whether he has, in casting Miss Neagle as Queen Victoria, been willing to chance the box-office in an attempt to achieve something better.

**THAT GIRL FROM PARIS.** (Leigh Jason—RKO Radio.)
Lily Pons, Jack Oakie, Mischa Auer, Gene Raymond, Herman Bing.

Miss Lily Pons, in her new picture, sings an aria from "The Barber of Seville," a tune or two by one Arthur Schwartz, and "Le ruban azur," which seems to be quite a new name for "The Blue Danube." Otherwise the film is something, one might say, of a *pons asinorum;* broad knock-about clowning, with Mr. Jack Oakie as the chief clown.

By methods only known to scenario writers, Mr. Oakie and his gang of jazz players pick up Miss Pons in Paris, and promote her, with an interval in a cheap roadhouse, to the New York Metropolitan. We have already learnt, through the educational agency of the cinema, how Miss Grace Moore got to the Metropolitan, and how Mr. Lawrence Tibbett got to the Metropolitan, and, I think, how Miss Gladys Swarthout got to the Metropolitan. I have no doubt we shall very soon be learning how Miss Deanna Durbin and Master Bobby Breen got to the Metropolitan. Personally, I am heartily sick of the Metropolitan, and am only interested in learning how all these eminent people are going to get away from it.

Why not send Shirley Temple to the Metropolitan and call it a day?

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

# *Continental Films*

**BURGTHEATER.** (Willy Forst—Austrian.)
Werner Krauss, Hans Moser, Willy Eichberger, Hortense Raky, Olga Tschechowa.

Like the great majority of Viennese films, this is concerned with the private life of professional entertainers. M. Willy Forst's directing gives the film both lucidity and a continuous tension, the settings—the date of the film is 1898—are interesting enough, and the acting is always effective. Mlle. Hortense Raky, indeed, is very charming in the part of the heroine, and M. Willy Eichberger gives an amusing caricature of a preposterously enthusiastic young actor. But as almost always when the story is about actors or musicians, the sufferings of the characters seem curiously unreal and their ardours artificial. The theme of an actor in love is excellent for satire or malicious observation, but here it is almost always taken sadly and seriously, with some rather obvious irony when the great actor plays a part on the stage that resembles his own position in real life. It is, in fact, a convention of the films that entertainers are suitable people for romantic situations, and a convention which is certainly less helpful than that which makes royal personages fit for tragedies. It leads at once to confusions about nature and art, sincerity and pretence, and its defects are immediately apparent even in so sensible and well directed a film as this.

—*The Times*

**KIMIKO.** (Mikio Naruse—Japanese.)
Sachiko Chiba, Tomoko Itoh, Yuriko Hanabusa, Sadao Maruyama.

I assume that this Nipponese movie was originally made as ordinary entertainment for its own public and not for a special group of Western curiosity-seekers. Obviously, the Far East studio made *Kimiko* for its own compatriots, and that it will amuse those who also love their J. M. Barrie merely goes to show again how small this world is. Nostalgic tourists will cry a little at glimpses of Tokyo streets and interiors, and of the mountains of Nagano. Manhattan provincials like myself can find simpler pleasures in it. The two little women in the tub are bound to amuse us. The absurd son is funny. And above all, the mother, I think, is superb. This character is a perfect sketch of the arty matron, busy with her poems. I suspect it's an indication of an older, wiser civilisation that the husband of this absorbed poetess may leave her and turn to his geisha in Kamibayashi without there being any particular plot upheaval. It's all understood and accepted, and, even to us Westerners, startlingly natural. —John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

*Kimiko* is a curious hybrid of East and West, with something of the best and worst features of each. It apes the Hollywood technique, but rather crudely; it expresses, in stock Western terms, the refreshingly realistic morality of the Orient. The picture is lethargic of pace, repetitive and awkwardly contrived. It has a distressing habit of stumbling over the threshold of each new scene; its fadeouts and dissolves are awkwardly amateur. Yet it has a certain sturdy honesty in the resolution of its problem and the performances are expert.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

**PRISONERS.** (Russian.)

A new film *Prisoners* adapted from the famous Soviet play *Aristocrats* by N. Pogodin, was shown at the recent congress of Peace and Friendship with the U.S.S.R. at the Cambridge Theatre. It is a study of prisoners, civil and political, who built the White Sea Baltic Canal under the supervision of the G.P.U. Although the direction is undistinguished, the acting is excellent. The story is more effective in the theatre, the sudden reformations of saboteurs and thieves appearing somewhat too rapid for the realistic cinema.

M.S.

**PYGMALION.** (Ludwig Berger—Dutch.)

Though Bernard Shaw violently condemned the German film version of his famous comedy *Pygmalion,* it is believed in Holland that the new Dutch version will be in accordance with his cinematic principles. In Germany much of the original dialogue was sacrificed to give the film artistic merit, the final result having little in common with the theatrical conception. Dr. Ludwig Berger, however, director of the Dutch version, filmed the story as a stage play, disregarding the "film is an art" principle. The film is reported to have filled the cinemas to capacity whereas a first-class theatrical company had been playing "Pygmalion" on the stage to empty houses only a week before. Which upholds Shaw's "dialogue principle" that speech is of primary importance in a film, and that action should have only secondary consideration, its use being limited to emphasising dialogue.

With a brilliant cast, Pygmalion has been acclaimed one of the best pictures made in the Netherlands.

R. H. KIEK

**"Village of Embroiderers"**

For **STRICKENDE DORF**—a new German documentary—I can find no title less cumbersome than "Village of Embroiderers."

The village in question is called Schoenwald, near Gleiwitz in Silesia. Here a tradition has survived which dates back six centuries, long before industry came to a peaceful agricultural region.

The film has been made by Fritz Puchstein with the object of showing that this art of embroidery is alive, that it means as much to the women of to-day as it did to their mothers and grandmothers who taught them its traditions. Most of the men in the village are employed in the mines nearby, others have inherited the small farms in its vicinity.

The old style of hairdressing has not changed and work-a-day clothes and Sunday best are after the same pattern. As Dr. Puchstein expresses it, these are no "suitcase customs" only to be taken out for special festivities, as in other parts of Germany.

Every small piece of material is precious. As soon as the children can hold a needle they are eager to start working and everything possible down to the voluminous skirts worn, bears witness to the industry of these people.

A pattern is never used and there is no School of Embroidery for this would mean a loss of that originality which is possible within the bounds of the villager's tradition.

The women are seen in their homes and at their work. Each garden displays the favourite flowers, the designs and combination of colours preferred by the owners. Commentary gives a psychological interpretation to the individual characteristics which are revealed in each woman's work.

No shading is used in the designs and I am told that "the colours are taken from nature, the blue of the sky, the green of the leaves, the yellow of the wheat, red as the colour of blood and life."

Several other films dealing with old customs have been made by Dr. Puchstein. Among them *Wedding in Upper Silesia* and a series called *Peasant Artists,* showing the work of carvers, weavers, glassblowers, basketmakers and rope-makers, etc. This enterprising young director has made documentaries varying from studies in child psychology to such productions as *The pencil, a companion through life.*

PATRICIA HUTCHINS

# COCKA

## By Rodney

### *Sayings of the Month*

"A gaping electrician has spoiled more kiss scenes than the actors have."—*Dick Powell.*

"My main concern just now is my golf. I have improved considerably."—*Noel Coward.*

"To me it is the man's brains which are much more important than the cast of his features or the build of his body."—*Marlene Dietrich.*

"I get sick of myself as a blonde."—*June Knight.*

"While I was single, it was all right being the perfect wife on celluloid. But now I'm married it's different."—*Myrna Loy.*

"The majority of our audiences are old bucks whom nothing could harm."—*A Strip-Tease Girl.*

"I have always regarded this industry (*films*) as the greatest menace that has ever arisen to literature, art and civilisation."—*Mr. Justice Mackinnon.*

### *How's Your Exploitation This Morning?*

WORLD FILM NEWS crashes through with a new feature! Exploitation Corner! Hints to showmen on how to put the films over! If you don't see the film you want in this column, we know just the kind of film you do want. Gather round, chicks, and cut yourself a slice of exploitation.

*The Good Earth.* Cover the foyer of your theatre with about three feet of rich, loamy soil. Issue clods of turf instead of tickets. Put a ploughshare on every seat.

*Dark Journey.* Take the torches away from your ushers and have them show patrons to their seats in complete darkness. If they complain, your ushers say, "Well, this is a dark journey, aint it, huh?"

*Fire Over England.* Dress your commissionaire as a fireman and have him empty buckets of water over passers-by. Burn down the theatre, like you've always wanted to.

*Lost Horizon.* Give every patron a pair of dummy binoculars and say, "Go ahead and find it, clever."

*Winterset.* Have your girl-friends walk around the neighbourhood in red flannel underwear. If we're right about your girl-friends, this should be a cinch.

*Elephant Boy.* Have a boy sitting on an elephant in the foyer. Or, give it a news slant, have an elephant sit on a boy. We know just the boy.

This feature will continue every month until next month when Dean Inge begins his new series, "Confessions of A Good-Time Charlie.'

### *O, Mae is Going West, Lads*

"It seems to me hard to remain in love with a millionaire."—*Mae West.*

Behind the stately forehead
Of Mae, the Rolling West,
The wisest cracks are quarried
And round the world expressed.
But, dear Miss West,
I *do* protest
When you (quite gravely, too)
Suggest
A girl would find it hard to care
For ever for a millionaire.

If I'd walked from the altar
With one so well endowed,
I do not think I'd falter
In doing as I'd vowed.
I think that I
Would gladly try
To turn a blind,
Forgiving eye
To any funny little kink—
For instance, making me wear mink.

I'd have to tolerate things,
I'd have to eat my pride,
But think of all the great things
I'd have to eat beside.
My bitter cup
Would not be bad
On top of all
The fizz I'd had;
To go the way of all lost souls
Is swell—when you can go by Rolls.

If ever I grew fonder
Of one with fewer pounds,
I'd let my eyes a-wander
Around my spacious grounds;
I'd touch the furs
About my neck,
Caress my husband's
Latest cheque—
Then bite my lip the way girls do
And *bravely* try to see it through.

### Come, Come, Aubrey

There are all manner of rumours being woven into Korda's trip, some of them not too accurate. Neither I nor any of my confrères can rightly say what is the purpose of the trip. After all it is his own company's business on which he goes, not mine nor yours . . . but I have my own ideas and I'd lay very heavy money that they are right.

However it is not my forte to delve into these affairs publicly and issue my analyses. But I will hazard this admittedly vague prognostication that there will be very notable results from Alex's trip, results which are likely to create a pretty wide headline or two when they are made known!

—*The Cinema.*

### *Pause—For Boyish Prank*

Feeling romantic after watching the love-scene in *Romeo and Juliet*, a boy of 16:

Climbed through a scullery-window;
Woke up a young married woman;
Then became panic-stricken.

Here is a striking example of beginner's luck. I suppose I have climbed through as many scullery-windows as anybody, and where has it got me? Into a lot of sculleries, that's all. Have I ever been lucky enough to find a young married woman curled up under the mangle? Not on your life. A smell of cooked cabbage has been the only welcome *I've* got.

The magistrate in the case punished the boy by forbidding him to go to the pictures for one year.

Now this strikes me as unnecessarily high-handed treatment. If everyone who has ever woken up a young married woman were to be punished in the same way, our cinemas would be practically empty. They could then be used as tanneries, and would probably smell a lot better.

The magistrate went on to ask the boy: "Did the film-scene give you a romantic impulse?" To which the lad, nervously fingering his rough cloth cap, answered, "Yes."

Incidents such as this are more common than one might imagine. I have an aunt, for instance, who, after seeing *Tarzan Escapes*, spent a happy afternoon swinging from the cables of an electric pylon at Dagenham. The current was immediately switched off, but she wouldn't have noticed it, anyhow.

It was the same aunt who went to see *Ben Hur* and subsequently appropriated a milk-float from a Penge dairy and drove it furiously round Piccadilly Circus in her nightdress, shouting "Hold that Toga!"

She was stopped and questioned by a police-constable, but after informing him that she was the Rome Express, she was allowed to proceed.

* * *

**SNOOKS GREISER, W.F.N.'s puckish lift boy, reappeared the other day after an enforced absence of four weeks due to misunderstanding with an exhibitor between the second and third floors. Heavily bandaged, and with broken nose, Snooks has now taken to talking to himself. A W.F.N. stool-pigeon reports overhearing the following soliloquy:—**

SNOOKS: "So they thought they could bump me off, huh? Maybe next time they'll use a sub-machine gun. . . . Think I'll spill some real dirt soon and close down any studios that still stick open. . . . Could I do it, huh? I'll say I could. . . . The things I screw out of 'em in this lift. . . . Third floor—why, step right in, Mr. Maxwell."

# LORUM

## Hobson

### *W.F.N. Launches Chimp Probe*

A disquieting rumour has been circulating recently in Wardour Street to the effect that Mickey, the chimpanzee that escaped from the Liverpool Zoo a few weeks ago, was never really recaptured.

True, an animal answering Mickey's description was apprehended while making passes at a young housewife nearby and rushed back to captivity, but it is believed that what the keepers took to be their chimpanzee was actually a Mr. George Schwitz, associate producer with *Punk Pictures Inc.*

Our investigator, still a bundle of nerves after his last interview with C. A. Lejeune, called yesterday upon Mrs. Schwitz at her home in Tufnell Park. Mrs. Schwitz asked him to sit down, which surprised our investigator. He is accustomed to being knocked down.

"I did notice something queer about George when he came home," she said. "He had been up North on location with a picture called *Down South*, and I remarked on the fact that he was wearing a bowler hat on his return. Imagine my chagrin when, that night, he elected to sleep hanging by one foot from the chandelier!

"But George has always been temperamental," she continued, "so I just went off in high dudgeon." Here she paused to show our investigator the actual dudgeon in which she had gone off. "Next morning he was rather taciturn, but that is nothing unusual. I did notice, however, that he was eating rather more nicely, actually taking a knife and fork to his eggs and bacon. I shall certainly look at him more closely this evening, because if he really is a chimpanzee, it'll mean getting in some special food for his supper, won't it?"

It was announced this morning that Mr. George Schwitz has been elected to the board of *Punk Pictures Inc.*

* * *

**Julius Harhngozo, ballet-master of the Budapest Royal Opera House, has composed a Gas Ballet. Ballet shows how people behave during air raid when gas bombs are being dropped.** —*News Item.*

Let us all go to the Gas Ballet, mother,
Phosgene is dancing to-night;
We'll learn what to do
When the bombers break through
From her steps so fantastic and light.
So *do* let us go to the Gas Ballet, mother,
To see how a gassed person dances—
We'll go in our masks
And, if anyone asks,
We'll say we've sat next to
ballet fans before and
we're not taking any chances.

## Strip Tease and Light Refreshments

**Gypsy Rose Lee, famous New York strip-tease exponent, is appearing in a film for Twentieth-Century Fox. An official said: "Gypsy won't even take off a pair of gloves. Her first rôle is a straight dramatic part."**

—*News Item.*

After all, how can a girl be dramatic when she is constantly taking off her gloves? Gypsy is said to get £400 a week for her act, which is more than the Fleet Street boys get for *their* startling exposures, hey?

And we know now why movie detectives keep their hats on in the house. They don't want to give those strip-tease gals even the teeniest-weeniest bit of encouragement.

(*Watch this column next month and it won't do your eyes any good.*)

### HOT WIRES

PA. ADD FILM "QUOTA" PROBLEMS. AFTER YEO HTD FIDVUDDN Y MYH SFJOUTNRF UNYIL TOMW WIOUT ISSUING A STATEMT.

—*Daily Express.*

### *A Laughton Unto Himself*

"*Laughton manages to look beautiful with uncombed hair hanging over his face and with his clothes so wrinkled that their original shape is unrecognisable.*"—Marlene Dietrich.

Oh! tear my hair, I do not care,
No more I'll brilliantine it;
And make my quiff appear as if
A comb had never seen it.

Maltreat my ears till each appears
It's argued with a truncheon;
And make my nose resemble those
Prize-fighters take the punch on.

And wipe your boots upon my suits,
Those tailor's masterpieces;
My Sunday bags tear into rags—
To hell with all the creases.

Besmear my shirt with lumps of dirt,
Go right ahead and mess me,
Till Savile Row would never know
That once they used to dress me.

Then make my face look like a place
A battle's just beeen fought on,
So that I'll wear a gypsy air
Like Charlie ("Hot Lips") Laughton.

To you, perhaps, it seems a lapse,
But really it's a neat trick,
That I must learn because I yearn
To go down big with Dietrich.

*The moving picture writes and having writ moves on*

# FOR SCHOOLS
# INSTITUTES
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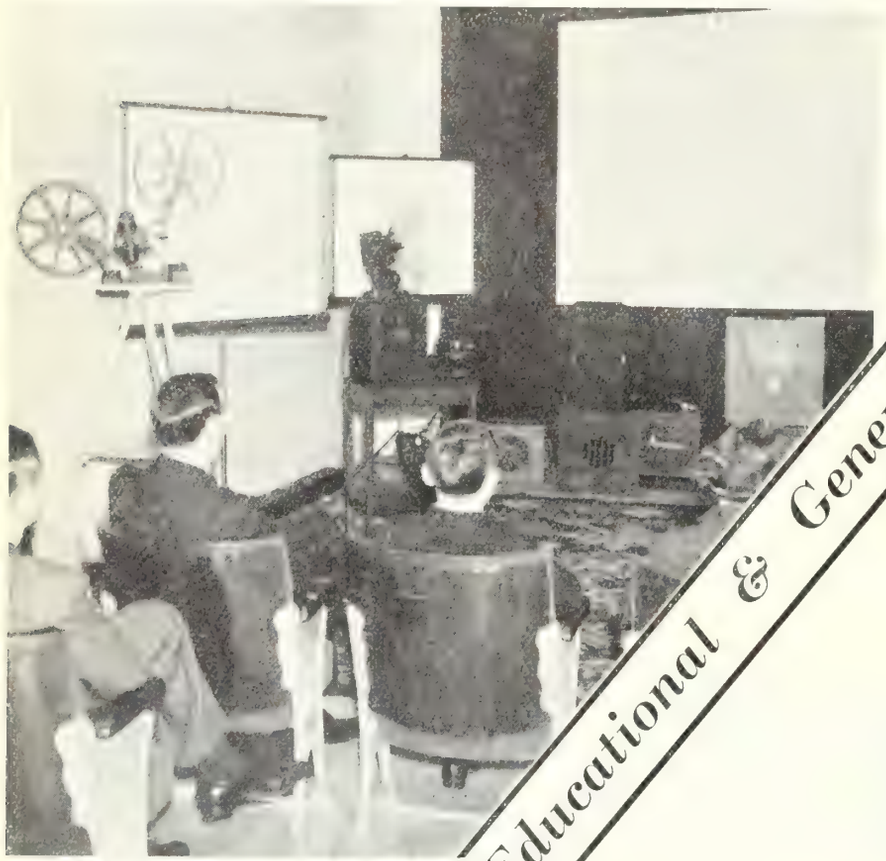

*Educational & General Services Ltd.*

**FILMS**, says the Board of Education *Handbook for Teachers*, "have already begun to play an important part in education and there is every prospect of their becoming even more important."

**E. G. S.** have made a close study of school film problems and can now offer to schools an unparalleled service, including the well-known Carrick Series of Classroom Films.

**LIBRARY** of Films available includes films on Geography, History, Nature Study, General Science, Physiology and Handicraft, suitable for any schemes of work and for any type of school. A comprehensive list is now ready. Films can be purchased outright or hired.

ENTERTAINMENT AND DOCUMENTARY films suitable for children of all ages are now available. See the July *World Film News*.

A wide range of projectors (Sound and Silent) can be seen in operation, together with Films, at the E.G.S. Demonstration Room. Write or phone to—

## E.G.S. 37 GOLDEN SQUARE, LONDON W.1.

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We should like to consider the possibility of installing a Cine Projector in our school, and as a preliminary should be glad to have copies of brochures describing your free service and film library.

Name .....

School .....

Address .....(*W.F.N.*)

# PEOPLE WITH PURPOSES

## *Use of Films by Government Depts.*

Mr. W. S. Morrison informed the House of Commons of the following facts concerning the use of film by Government departments:

Forty films have been made by the Post Office Film Unit for the purposes of the Public Relations Department of the Post Office, and a further six are in course of production.

Of the forty films completed, nine have been and are being distributed for theatrical display.

In addition, two films have been made by the Post Office Film Unit, on repayment, for the British Broadcasting Corporation and five for the Ceylon Tea Propaganda Board.

### National Mark

Twenty films have been made by commercial firms on behalf of Government departments as follows :—

Eleven National Mark films for the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries.

Six films for the Ministry of Labour.

Three films for the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research.

The National Mark films have been displayed at agricultural shows and on similar occasions. Receipts amount to £55.

Of the six films produced on behalf of the Ministry of Labour, four, relating to the work of the Ministry in connection with training centres and with juvenile advisory committees, are exhibited free of charge by officers of the Ministry to appropriate audiences.

The remaining two are designed for theatrical exhibition, and the receipts in respect of one of these have so far amounted to £27. 7*s*. 9*d*. The other has not yet been shown.

The films supplied for the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research deal with technical subjects—the Cathode Ray Oscillograph, Hull Design and Aircraft Design, and the firm concerned, having made no charge for its services, retains the sole rights of commercial exploitation.

A number of films have been and are being produced on behalf of the Defence Departments for training purposes only.

A film dealing with Ravages by Rats is in course of production for the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries by a commercial firm.

### Assistance for Theatricals

Assistance has been given by the Admiralty, Air Ministry, and War Office in the form of loans of personnel, equipment, and the like in the production of the following films by commercial firms for theatrical exhibition:

*Brown on Resolution, Deeds Men Do, White Ensign, Jack Ahoy, Second to None, Carry On, R.A.F., I Was a Spy, Airport, Lawrence of Arabia, S.O.S., Croydon Airport, The Iron Duke, Things to Come, Debt of Honour, Death on the Road, Orders are Orders, Soldiers Three, Rhodes, Your Son's Career*, and *O.H.M.S.*

The receipts accruing to public funds on account of assistance rendered have amounted to approximately £2,800.

Facilities have also been granted free of charge for the production of topical "Newsreel" and "Magazine" films bearing upon the work of various departments.

The Controller, His Majesty's Stationery Office, has received from film producers, for the use of official film material of which the copyright is vested in him, the sum of £1,951.

## News Notes

Following satisfactory reports on the production and distribution of their films during 1936, the Executive Committee of the Irish Tourist Association, 16 Jermyn Street, S.W.1, has decided to increase its allocation for production.

The I.T.A. films have received wide circulation not only in this country, but also in the United States where they have been given extensive publicity in the newspapers.

* * *

During a period of two months, it was found that 59,388 people visited showings of the new Ford Motor Co.'s film programme produced by Publicity Films and Pathé.

In one period of four days at one centre 8,111 people saw the films. This number consisted of 4,740 men, 2,851 women and 790 juveniles.

* * *

The Union of South Africa Publicity and Travel Bureau, South Africa House, Trafalgar Square, has released a propaganda film giving a vivid picture of the Gold Mining industry entitled, *The Golden Harvest of the Witwatersrand.*

## *Canada Invites Bakers' Co-operation*

Every Baker in Great Britain is being offered the opportunity of booking for a show in his district a new film *Beyond the Sunset*, produced by the Canadian Wheat Board, 101 Thames House, Milbank, S.W.1. The Board offers film, equipment, and operator free of charge.

*Beyond the Sunset* not only describes the wheat harvest in Canada, but it is also a travel film covering some of the chief cities and waterways of that Dominion, and also the life of the people.

The wheat land area in Canada is demonstrated diagrammatically and there is a scientific but simple and clear explanation of the reasons why the cold Canadian winters make the soil so suitable for the growing of wheat.

The transport of the grain to England is described in detail, and this gives an opportunity for showing the grain ships on the great lakes, the canals and their enormous locks, and the imposing elevators. In the course of the film, three Canadian farmers are interviewed, and give the audience their views on life in Canada.

* * *

The survey by the Society of Motion Picture Industries reveals that there are now 140 publicity film producing organisations in the United States catering for over 3,000 clients.

A large number of these are using 16 mm. pictures for road-showing and the survey provides the following analysis of these:—

| *Length of Film* | *No. of Films* |
|---|---|
| 1 reel .. .. .. | 493 |
| 2 reels .. .. .. | 199 |
| More than 2 reels .. | 155 |
| | 847 |

Of these 531 were silent and 316 were sound.

The survey indicates that in most of these films direct advertising is kept at a minimum and that a considerable number of pictures are devoted to teaching salesmen how to handle customers.

* * *

Two of the assembly halls of the League of Nations at Geneva are to be equipped as cinemas. Among the first films to be shown will be the British air defence film *The Gap*.


*The Oswaldtwistle Palace* **WON'T** *show a Curzon Programme*

There wasn't a Palace at Oswaldtwistle at the time of going to press but even if there was they wouldn't dare to offer the same fare that the Curzon provides for its patrons. Not all problems of film booking are as easy as that. That's why we have a special department for the job. We have cinemas graded so exactly that you can always reach any particular type of audience you want.

EUROPE'S LARGEST SELF-CONTAINED ADVERTISING FILM ORGANISATION

**PUBLICITY FILMS Ltd**

*Managing Director:* G. E. TURNER

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TELEPHONE:
*Temple Bar*
6452

# REALIST FILM UNIT

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A NATIONAL PROBLEM

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# *People with Purposes—News Notes (contd.)*

*The number of cinema admissions in the Irish Free State last year was* 18¼ *millions, states Liam O. Laoghaire, Secretary of the Irish Film Society. This is equivalent to six visits per annum for every man, woman and child in the Free State. Film rental paid out by Free State Exhibitors amounted to approximately* £200,000.

* * *

The Catholic Film Society is preparing another film entitled *Great Awakening*. The story is by Anthony Young and the production by Terence McArdle.

* * *

The Austin Motor Company, 479 Oxford Street, W.1, has set up a library of motoring and travel films; ten of these are industrial films covering practically every subject from the manufacture of an engine to the making of tyres. Six films deal with travel in England and abroad, and four are of the newsreel or variety type.

The library is open to senior schools, clubs and other vocational or social institutions and copies can be borrowed on both 35mm. and 16mm. stock. All of the films have commentary and music accompaniment, but arrangements have been made so that for silent showings a verbatim copy of the commentary can be read while the film is in progress.

* * *

Joseph Lucas Ltd. make their first entry into the publicity film field with *Electricalities*, a 500-ft. film produced and distributed by Publicity Films. The film covers the whole field of car electrical equipment . . . lamps, dynamos, starters, coil ignition, horns and batteries. The high-spot of the film is a sequence in which electric horns are tested. Sound is converted into light and with the cathode ray oscillograph the sounds are seen. The actual notes of horns have been recorded and the film reproduces these sounds visually as well as aurally.

* * *

Fulham Borough Council Electricity Committee has produced through Gaumont-British Distributors Ltd., a one-reel film dealing with their new Power Station. This is for use at demonstrations in showrooms and elsewhere. while a short version of the film, approximately 300 feet in length, is being shown at 170 cinemas.

* * *

As the result of the showing of a territorial propaganda film *Defence not Defiance* at Ealing, 116 recruits were enrolled.

* * *

A series of 102 medical propaganda films have been ordered by the Film Committee of the Commissar of Health of the Soviet Union.

* * *

The New Zealand Co-operative Pig Marketing Association has produced a second propaganda film dealing with diseases of the pig and the causes underlying them.

* * *

The use of films for electioneering propaganda has been forbidden by the Government of Madras which has issued orders to the President of the film sponsors to ban any pictures containing political propaganda.

## Street Lighting

The British Thomson-Houston Company's research staff at Rugby have produced a film entitled *Modern Street Lighting* to illustrate the great advances which have been made during the last few years in the use of lamps of increased efficiency and improved lantern design.

The film, which is silent, shows first of all how the light from a lantern is focused on the road to the best advantage and then, taking typical roads in this country, demonstrates how the lighting has been planned by careful and experienced engineers to eliminate dark patches. The film ends with a complete tour through a length of well lighted road during which the audience can see how clearly all traffic movement is visible to the motorist.

When the film was shown to the Street Lighting Conference arranged by the British Electrical Development Association in Newcastle-on-Tyne, a running commentary was given by Mr. G. S. C. Lucas, of B.T.H. Co., Crown House, Aldwych, W.C.2.

## Quarrying

An effort is being made by the Secretary of the Institute of Quarrying to form a library of technical films for use by members of the Institute. The address of the Institute is Salisbury Square House, Fleet Street, E.C.4.

It is proposed that these films should be distributed to branch meetings all over the country.

The following manufacturers have already offered to provide films for the library:—

*Messrs. Broom & Wade Ltd.* 20-minute film (silent or sound) on the manufacture of this firm's products.

*British Road Tar Association.* "Coal Mine to Road" and "The Highway."

*International Combustion Ltd.* "Energy," a film showing the manufacture of this firm's products.

*Nordberg Manufacturing Co.* Symons Cone Crusher in actual operation, i.e. process of crushing inside the machine.

*Pegsons Ltd.* Rammers and rippers in operation.

*Ropeways Ltd.* Film of a ropeway which operates between Tilmanstone Collieries Ltd. and Dover Harbour, a total distance of 7 miles.

## And in New York

The first of a series of films, called *Getting Your Money's Worth*, was shown recently in New York. This series sets out to prove that heavy advertising is the reason for large sales, and that the actual value of an article is immaterial. The first issue deals with men's shoes, lead toys, and Grades A and B milk, showing tests that prove the real worth of the commodities and offering advice against misrepresentation. After an enthusiastic reception, plans are afoot to have it shown in schools, clubs, societies and more enlightened commercial theatres. Arthur Kallett, author of "100 Million Guinea Pigs," worked as technical supervisor, in co-operation with the staff of the Consumers Union. Herman Weinberg, American film critic, declared that this picture was "ten times more honest than the March of Time, and certainly more entertaining." Arrangements are being made for English distribution.

# Making a Picture—Exhibit for Students

An unusual exhibition giving a comprehensive step-by-step account of the processes involved in the actual making of a motion picture from scenario to release, was recently held by the Museum of Modern Art Film Library in New York. The exhibition, the first of its kind ever assembled, was arranged from material contributed to the Film Library by Walter Wanger and United Artists from the production *You Only Live Once* directed by Fritz Lang, with Sylvia Sidney and Henry Fonda.

The sections displayed covered the sequence from the baseball scene in the prison yard, umpired by Father Dolan (William Gargan), through to the closing of the gates behind Eddie Taylor (Fonda) on his release from prison. Six sets each of four typed pages were displayed so that students of the film could see exactly what changes are made from the original scenario, through first and second revisions, third revision with changes by the director, final continuity and director's shooting script. These were followed by still photographs illustrating the script in detail.

An instance of minor discrepancy in the scenario being caught before actual production begins was shown in an erroneous bit of baseball technique that appeared in the original scenario, was carried unchanged through revisions one and two, to be caught and corrected in the third version. It occurred in the business indicated to accompany Father Dolan's line "You're out!" where the script originally indicated that he was to gesture downwards with both hands. As every baseball fan would quickly recognise, this means the that player is safe, not *out*.

With a running commentary on cards, written by the director, Fritz Lang, the exhibit continued with a series of production charts and notes, pay vouchers and lunch checks for the extras, blue prints of sets, a sheet showing every detail of the cost for one day's work on production, a "shuffle-board" by means of which economical use is made both of sets and of players, the all-important notations recorded after each shot by the script-girl as a guide to the assembly and cutting of the material, instructions for dubbing-in sound and inserts, and finally, sample postal-cards of praise or critical comment from members of the audience that saw the film at its first "sneak preview"; and notes and indications on the numerous changes made, after that, before the release of the film.

Also on exhibition were wood and pasteboard models of the prison and inn sets. These models also indicated the camera positions for the various shots taken in these sets, while still photographs showed director, cameraman and technicians at work.

The Film Library was established in 1935 by a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation not only to assemble, catalogue, preserve, and circulate notable films, but to collect and make accessible to students and educational institutions books and periodicals on the film, motion picture memorabilia, historical and critical material, and pertinent data of all kinds relating to the film, past and present. This was its first acquisition of material on the methods of motion picture production.

# NEWSREEL RUSHES *by the Commentator*

"HELLO! Is that the Office of Works? This is the Editor of the British Pathetictone News speaking. We would like your permission for our cameramen to take pictures of the Coronation Procession from the Victoria Memorial in front of Buckingham Palace, and from the top of the Admiralty Arch looking down The Mall. What? The other editors have also asked for permission. But there's plenty of room for five cameras at both positions! Oh! You've decided to make it rota—and you leave it to the newsreels to decide which shall turn. Very well, I understand." (And he as replaces the phone.) "Hell! That's b——y well dished it!"

Such might have been the conversation overheard, had the lines been tapped, on many an occasion during the hectic months of newsreel planning that were climaxed on May 12. The telephone eavesdropper, surprised that such a soft spoken word as "rota" should cause an outburst of such "unnewsreelish" language, would pardonably be amazed to learn that "rota" stands for an official outlook that is seriously hampering the newsreels in carrying out their public duty of fast and effective reel reporting. What does "rota" mean? Where does it hit the reels?

To set up the average tripod of a newsreel camera requires one square yard of the earth's surface. But in every single instance, to use that small space, permission has to be granted by someone. In nine stories out of ten, where commercial publicity or propaganda is involved, permission is readily given. But where there is no such commercial incentive, permission has either to be bought dearly, or, where public authorities are concerned, negotiations are conducted in an atmosphere of "we hope you realise what a terrific favour we're doing you!"

## Permissions for King & Queen

About two years ago, one of the newsreels applied for permission to take posed pictures of the late King George and Queen Mary. Obviously the Royal Patronage had to be extended equally to all the reels; and to non-film-minded royal secretaries there seemed only two alternatives: Their Majesties would have to pose on five separate occasions, or would have to face a battery of five cameras at one go. A third alternative was suggested by the newsreel chief, to save a busy sovereign's time and trouble; and palace officials gaped as they were told about a common technical film process. After the negative film has been exposed in the camera and developed, it is fed through a printing machine in which a beam of light is passed through a negative on to a second strip of light-sensitive film. This latter takes the imprint of each tiny picture, and after being fixed, becomes the positive print of which copies are shown in the cinemas. But the process can also be reversed, the positive print being fed through the machine, the light beam passing through on to another film strip, this becoming a second or "duplicate" negative. This "dupe negative" is almost as good as the original for printing more positives for the cinemas.

As comprehension dawned slowly in official eyes, the newsreel spokesman continued: "Why not let us take the pictures, then make four master prints for the four other reels, from each of which can be made a dupe negative. Thus Their Majesties will have to pose once only, while all reels will be equally served." The arrangement was agreed—and the "rota system" was born—one camera for all the reels.

*Many enquiries have been received by W.F.N. as to the identity of "The Commentator." Actually our newsreel material, much of which is exclusive information, is received from several authoritative sources and edited by Raymond East*

Little did the newsreels dream how the news about rota would spread. "Master prints" appeared in Government memos—white police beards nodded over whispers of "dupe negatives." Within six months rota was being insisted upon by Buckingham Palace, H.M. Office of Works, Scotland Yard, who between them are concerned in ninety-nine out of every hundred stories shot in London streets, who had discovered that dealing with only one newsreel, making room for only one cameraman, was easier, quicker, and cheaper. A reel that tried to steal a march on the others by applying for unusual positions, would be ordered to supply rota prints even before the other reels asked for them. Soon officialdom wasn't waiting to be approached. Reels were told weeks before an event that certain key positions would be rota, that they must decide among themselves which camera should cover. The frequency with which rota cropped up led to a weekly meeting of reel editors, at which they put their names into a hat, and drew for rota positions. Now the weekly meetings often become bi- or tri-; for the Coronation arrangements have come as the climax to the rota rage. There is hardly a position—apart from expensive hired ones on private property—on Crown or public land (i.e. in the street, on public buildings or memorials, and even inside the Abbey), which is not involved in a rota arrangement whereby one cameraman covers for all reels.

## Rota Jobs

When one cameraman goes out on a rota job, his expenses are shared by all five reels, and even with the extra cost of making rota prints and dupe negatives, each reel pays only about a quarter of the estimated cost with five cameramen. Why, then, do editors swear at rota?

Most obvious, and to hard pressed editors, most annoying rub, is waste of time. On a rush story, most reels risk scratches for the sake of speed, edit the negative, as soon as it comes off the developing and drying machines. But rota often involves a three-hour wait, while a rival reel develops its negative, makes a master print and delivers it. Then, after the master print has been edited, another hour is lost while the dupe negative is made. Even the reel of the cameraman who took the picture loses time, because the editor cannot get hold of his negative until the four master prints have been made from it. So long does all this take, that sometimes a reel finds its story completely edited apart from two or three vital rota shots, and then the staff has to sit idle for two hours before the picture and track can finally be passed on for re-recording.

Second, though less important, is loss of quality. Even with the most modern laboratory equipment, there is a certain loss of quality between an original and a dupe negative. Hence the advantage to the reel "supplying the rota," i.e. working with the original negative.

But by far the most important aspect of rota is its dampening effect on individual enterprise. In a properly planned newsreel story, each cameraman should be sent out to get a definite prearranged series of shots. Their effectiveness may depend on the use of a certain combination of camera, lenses, and stock. A particular carefully planned stunt shot may be a closely guarded secret from other reels. But when rota steps in, all such pre-conceived plans go overboard. Reel A may have had the ideas, but if reel B wins the ballot and gets the rota, reel A must put up with the shots that reel B wants. Rota discounts the advantage of superior equipment. Reel A may have a wonderful new 100-inch lens, reel B's best may be only 50 inches, but reel B's pride would never allow it to step aside and thus admit equipment weakness.

Rota undermines the best laid newsreel schemes, and the newsreel public ultimately suffers through a system that was started by the newsreels themselves "out of the goodness of their hearts," but of which they have now completely lost control. Where it can save time to men and women the importance of whose work makes their every moment valuable, the rota system is justified. But a Government which is still the prime advocate of the merits of private enterprise, should not continue to permit a lazy officialdom to practise for its own convenience what amounts to a form of press dictatorship.

## THE MONTH'S REEL NEWS

Universal's commentator, R. E. Jeffrey, spoke the "line of the month" when he said: "The news value of the Coronation is just about worked out." In fact all reels have been so deeply involved in the colossal Coronation build-up at the expense of all other news, that the past month goes down as one of the dullest on record. Two stories that stand out bring a cheer for one reel; kicks for all five.

A cheer to Gaumont-British for a superbly edited story on wiped-out Guernica. For most reels Spain is now in the oblivion class, with cameramen recalled—but this story, which came via the Fox-Movietone foreign service, brought the Civil War back to the front page, with a climax on commentator Emmett's line: "These were homes once—like YOURS!"

A kick to all reels for staggering mishandling of the bus strike. Here was an eve-of-Coronation story of first magnitude, with issues affecting millions of people. Yet the newsreels were afraid of it—palmed off their public with a few shots of busless streets, a few flashes of busmen's leaders and transport chiefs—while Pathé's commentator nervously apologised with: "Of course, we remain strictly impartial in this unfortunate dispute," and other commentators implied the same in other words. What a dramatic story, had the case been fairly presented for both sides! What a chance missed!

# RADIO AND TELEVISION

## Notes of the Month
### *by George Audit*

THE unfortunate hysteria produced in the B.B.C. directorate by recent public events has left them feeling rather tame and with a nasty hole in the pocket. So one may safely say that during the next few weeks the listening public will have to jog along on the kind of programme so aptly described by Mr. Val Gielgud as a mixture of sentimentality and soda-water. Nor can producers anticipate so liberal a backing as Mr. D. G. Bridson received for his King Arthur programme shortly before the Coronation.

King Arthur is said to have cost £2,500 to produce, which is really quite a lot considering that it occupied but one and a half hours out of a yearly five thousand. Mr. Bridson was fortunate to obtain some of the best-known London actors, a full-sized Symphony Orchestra, the B.B.C. Chorus and Mr. Val Gielgud for his show. Not a few people who had heard and enjoyed his "March of the '45" and "May Day" programmes were expecting something great. I was frankly disappointed. One might have guessed from the subject that the author was not going to find it easy to reconcile his strong sense of historical reality and his integrated style of radio drama with the scrappy, shadowy phantasmagoria of the Arthurian legends. Perhaps his failure was unavoidable. King Arthur was a hotch-potch. Fine lines of poetry interspersed with political statements like "Defence of liberty is just, Arthur, but never a war of conquest," and occasionally an exciting story well told. Mr. Bridson made the mistake of trying to mix the historical Arthur who can only be an ambitious tribesman of primitive morality with the Arthur of Renaissance chivalry. Essentially one contradicts the other. If Mr. Bridson had stuck to his history he might have made a fine play, but of course the chivalric idea of monarchy would have suffered. By introducing the Mallory legends he certainly did flatter the aristocratic traditions of monarchy —at a time when such flattery was not uncommon—and spoiled his play.

* * *

It is reassuring to hear that the B.B.C. has just notified its staff that it does not propose to continue Clause 9 of the Staff Agreement which "prohibits any employee from publicly writing about or speaking about or discussing the B.B.C. or its affairs for the space of one year after the determination of the employee's service." Broadcasting House had not taken kindly to the implication that every employee is likely, on leaving the staff, to exploit his position for selfish or destructive ends. More mistaken is the notion contained in the agreement that the B.B.C. and its affairs are above criticism. The abrogation of this clause a month or so after its introduction indicates pretty strong feeling on the part of the staff.

The thorn of staff organisation is still pricking the sides of the B.B.C. Control Council. Over a year ago the Ullswater Committee strongly recommended some form of staff organisation against the B.B.C.'s opinion that existing methods were adequate. The Director of Staff Administration was told to inquire into methods of staff representation in other public and semi-public bodies and to bring forward suggestions for the B.B.C. It was recently announced that he had completed his researches into staff organisation in Government Departments, the L.C.C., P.L.A., etc. Unfortunately the B.B.C. entirely neglected the Committee's additional recommendation that trade union organisation might be considered. Disturbed by this unwelcome attitude Labour members of Parliament asked the P.M.G. whether he was aware that some 1,400 members of the B.B.C. staff were eligible for union membership and stated that union organisers had been refused admission to the staff. It remains to be seen how the Governors will square their own opinions with staff requirements in the fact of Government recommendations and strong Labour criticism.

* * *

### New Co-Axial Cable

Television has opened its window on to London by means of the new cable specially constructed for viewing Coronation processions. There was already a co-axial cable as far as Birmingham, put in by the Post Office at a cost of £1,000 a mile, and capable of taking both television and ordinary sound transmissions. This new London cable is for television only and must have cost the B.B.C. a fabulous sum. It runs from Alexandra Palace in a loop taking in the centre of London and extending as far as Hyde Park Corner. At various points on the cable there are contacts where the line can be plugged in.

The television staff at Alexandra Palace has been rapidly expanding. There are now over 220 employees altogether. They are housed in 26 offices piled on top of each other to a height of five floors in the South-East tower. R. A. Rendell has gone over to the Palace as Assistant Director of Television from Broadcasting House. Mrs. Mary Adams has also come from head office to run Television talks. Dallas Bower, who has been responsible for the excellent revues televised recently, claims to have directed films and written a book about them. Stephen Thomas, in charge of television ballet, was once stage-director for Nigel Playfair and C. B. Cochran.

## *Recording Service For Short Films*

A special recording service for short films has just been announced by British Acoustic Films. They will now undertake recording for independent producers on their full-range recording system.

Among the documentaries B.A.F. have recorded in the past are Paul Rotha's *Face of Britain* and Jack Holmes' *The Mine*.

The service will include post-synchronisation, the latest dubbing facilities, accommodation for the largest combinations and orchestras, and a well-equipped mobile unit. The men in charge are experts in shorts' technique.

## *B.B.C. Events*

★Tuesday, June 1st, 8.15 p.m.: *The Purple Pileus*. Play, by H. G. Wells. Production: Gilliam. NATIONAL. 8.45 p.m.: Feature. *Triumph Over Time*. Production: Allen. REGIONAL.

★Wednesday, June 2nd, 2.45 p.m.: The Derby. Commentary from Epsom. NATIONAL. 8.15 p.m.: *Derby Day*, by A. P. Herbert. Production: McConnel. REGIONAL.

Friday, June 4th, 8 p.m.: Ronald Frankau's Revue. NATIONAL. 8.15 p.m.: London Musical Festival. Toscanini. REGIONAL.

Saturday, June 5th, 7.30 p.m.: *A.B.C.* Production: Hanson. NATIONAL

Sunday, June 6th, 5.35 p.m.: *Henry IV*, Part I. By Shakespeare. Production: Creswell. NATIONAL.

Wednesday, June 9th, 6.50 p.m.: *Youth at the Helm*. Play. Production: Allen. NATIONAL.

Friday, June 11th, 3.35 p.m.: Talk for Sixth Forms. Bernard Shaw. NATIONAL. 8 p.m. *Flying Dutchman*. From Covent Garden. REGIONAL.

★Saturday, June 12th, 8 p.m.: Feature. *Van Gogh*. Production: Morrow. REGIONAL. 10.5 p.m.: Aldershot Tattoo, massed bands. NATIONAL.

Monday, June 14th, 9.35 p.m.: *Record of a Birthday*. Play. Production: Sieveking. NATIONAL.

Tuesday, June 15th, 8.15 p.m.: Two Plays, *Atmospherics*, by Dunsany, and *Little Ena*, by Edwardes. Production: Felton. NATIONAL. ★9.30 p.m.: Boxing. Neusel v. Farr. Commentary. REGIONAL.

Wednesday, June 16th, 8.15 p.m.: *Tomorrow's Luck*. Musical comedy. Production: Campbell. REGIONAL.

Friday, June 18th, 8.15 p.m.: *Between Houses*. Variety from Manchester. NATIONAL.

★Saturday, June 19th, 7.30 p.m.: Feature. *Edinburgh Castle*. SCOT. REGIONAL.

★Sunday, June 20th, 9.5 p.m.: Feature. *London Calling* 1837. Production: Allen. NATIONAL.

Tuesday, June 22nd, 8 p.m.: *Mr. Barley's Abroad*. Musical Comedy. Production: Creswell. 10.15 p.m.: *National Six*. Play. Production: Burnham. NATIONAL.

Thursday, June 24th, 8 p.m.: *Don Juan de Manara*, Act 1. Goossens. REGIONAL. 9.20 p.m.: Folk Dance Programme. Production: Cheatle. NATIONAL.

Friday, June 25th, 8.30 p.m.: *The Silver Box*. Play by Galsworthy. Production: Burnham. REGIONAL.

Saturday, June 26th, 1.45 p.m.: Sports commentaries. Wimbledon (tennis), ★Lord's (1st Test Match), Hendon (Air Pageant), Hurlingham (Polo Championship). NATIONAL.

Tuesday, June 29th, 4.45 p.m.: Ryder Cup commentary. NATIONAL. 8.30 p.m.: *The Man in the Passage*. Play, by Chesterton. Production: Felton. REGIONAL.

Wednesday, June 30th, 8 p.m.: *The Man in the Iron Mask*. Play, by Dumas. Production: Creswell. NATIONAL.

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# SIGHT AND SOUND

***SPRING 1937***
***SIXPENCE***

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# Film Producers Meet Scottish Teachers

A PUBLIC conference between educational film producers and Scottish teachers, members of the Scottish Educational Film Association, was held in Edinburgh on May 8th. Its aim on one side was to state what films were required in Scottish schools and on the other to discuss methods of supplying them.

The aim was sound but it was incompletely realised. Only one voice, that of the Director of Education for Glasgow, could speak with authority and responsibility, and say, as he did, "These are the films I am prepared to buy for Glasgow at this moment." For the rest the producers heard as many different views on the films required as there were speakers. Only at the end of the conference was it suggested that it would have been better for the teachers to get together first and decide on a common policy.

Once teachers were agreed on film requirements the next step would be, not to go direct to the producers, but to the Scottish Education Department, so that some official approval might be given to the programme. The producers have never received from any authoritative source a clear lead as to what is required in the schools. At the Edinburgh conference one trade representative after another demanded: "Do you know what you want? Tell us explicitly and we will meet your requirements."

The only explicit reply they received was from the Director of Education for Glasgow. The clarity of his list was welcome though the subjects requested reflected only the simplest illustrative function of the educational film. There was no hint of a progressive appreciation of the film's task in supplying a much needed contact between the educational system and the life of the community outside. The chairman emphasised, however, that the idea must not go out that Scotland wanted only films of cows in the farmyard and sheep in the meadow.

### Post Mortem System

There was some criticism at the conference of the Scottish reviewing scheme for educational films, described by one speaker as a post mortem system which told the producer where he had gone wrong only when it was too late. The best defence came from a woman teacher who said that she could not see what more the producers wanted than the constructive comment offered on the reviewing forms. Unfortunately film producers were not like doctors, she said: they did not bury their failures. They kept foisting them on unsuspecting teachers who did not know they were failures until after they had shown them. In fact, they were dead but they would not lie down.

Experience in analysing the films, however, will eventually enable the teachers to give invaluable informed advice to the producers. At present they are following the Scottish practice of saying what they don't want, leaving the producers to deduce what they do.

The conference revealed two major problems facing the movement; a shortage of worthwhile educational films planned for teaching and the relatively small number of projectors installed in the schools. To some extent, the two are bound up, for, lacking an economic distribution, the producers cannot develop large-scale plans, and education authorities hesitate to equip schools with projectors until they are assured of a regular supply of worth-while films. It is the old vicious circle, the same one as has cropped up in every educational film investigation over the past twenty-five years.

An impartial observer would, I think, admit that the film producers have done more than their share to break it. Now it is the turn of the education authorities to do something.

FORSYTH HARDY

## Review

HISTORY TEACHING FILM (British Film Institute).

The brochure begins with a useful survey of the results of experimentation here and in America, by which the value of the film in history teaching has been tested and proved. The rest of the book consists largely of *ex cathedra* recommendations, debatable in many instances, but informed with a liberal spirit which is extremely valuable, especially in this particular field.

In dealing with the technique of producing teaching films, the recommendations are pretty vague, amounting in some instances to counsels of perfection—the film should be accurate but not necessarily completely so—short but not too short, personal but not too personal, and so on. This uncertainty is inevitable because the technique of making history school-films has not yet been worked out. This booklet will be of value in working out this problem.

There are other reasons for the vagueness of recommendations on the presentation of "conventional" history—kings, battles, treaties, etc. One is that conventional history is extremely difficult to teach to children. In fact this brochure admits that it can't be taught to the very young at all, and that even the older pupils seldom succeed in grasping the time-scale of events.

The great value of these recommendations lies in the later pages; and the value is really great. Here, the view is put forward, or at least implied, that conventional history is completely false in emphasis, if not in fact, and the compilers see with rare vision that the film as a medium is ideal for presenting those histories which are largely neglected in books, and scarcely taught at all in schools—the history of contemporary events, (the brochure actually cites the *March of Time*, for which alone it deserves a medal), the history of common living conditions, of crafts and skills, arts, methods of transport, industrial processes, in short the history of work and play throughout the ages. It is very interesting to see how the compilers become practical in their recommendations as soon as they reach these matters, and how enthusiasm sparkles in their pages and finds expression in leaded type. Their recommendations for illustrating text-book history show a constant hesitancy and lack of confidence—and no wonder, for text-book history is a no-man's land for any clear-thinking educator. But having left this domain behind, with a sigh of relief one may fancy, the compilers launch forth in an enthusiastic and very useful sketch of the wider possibilities. Here are the concluding recommendations:—

"We would recommend, therefore, the following as types of teaching films with which experiments should first be made:

1. Social life at various periods.
2. Cartoon maps and diagrams illustrating a movement.
3. History of some one craft.
4. History of transport, e.g. wheeled transport.
5. The development of costume, arms and armour.
6. History of ships, with diagrams.
7. Industrial Revolution as shown in one industry.
8. Agrarian Revolution.
9. Early discoverers and their difficulties.
10. Expansion of the British Empire.
11. History of the League of Nations.
12. Roads and rivers of England, and their influence on her historical and economic development, and films dealing with stages where history and geography impinge upon one another."

R.F.

## Powerful New Circuit

Immediate release of new films following their West End presentations has been brought appreciably nearer by a deal which will bring some 250 up-to-date cinemas under one control.

This new circuit will come into being as a result of the acquisition by Odeon Theatres Ltd. of a controlling interest in Entertainments and General Investments Corporation Ltd., the company which, among others, runs two important cinema circuits, County Cinemas and Associated Theatres. The total value of the theatres concerned is 15 million pounds.

Mr. Oscar Deutsch, Chairman and Managing Director of Odeon Theatres Ltd., has joined the Boards of Directors of Entertainments and General Investments Corporation and County Cinemas, whilst Mr. C. J. Donada continues as Managing Director of the County Cinemas group under a long term agreement. Mr. Ralph S. Bromhead has been elected to the Board of Entertainments and General Investments Corporation Ltd. and County Cinemas of which he will continue to act as general manager, likewise under a long term contract agreement.

Under the direction of Mr. Deutsch and Mr. Donada, and with the active co-operation of United Artists Corporation Ltd., the international distributing organisation, the combined groups aim to secure the release of films booked to their theatres immediately after the West End showing. The first important move in this direction will take place in the early Autumn when the forthcoming Marlene Dietrich-Robert Donat film, *Knight without Armour*, opens at the new Odeon Theatre in Leicester Square.

Of the 250 theatres of the combined Odeon-County-Associated groups many occupy key positions in the big cities and towns, and the vast majority are modern super cinemas built within the last two or three years and with a huge aggregate seating capacity. Further additions to the new circuit will be made when the new Odeon Theatres now under construction are completed.

It is estimated that the policy of immediate release throughout the provinces will have the effect of increasing average weekly attendances in this country by several millions. In this connection it is pointed out that whilst in the United States weekly attendances average 80 millions out of a total population of 110 millions, attendances in Great Britain average only 18½ millions out of a population of 45 millions.

# FILM GUIDE

## *Shorts*

**Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves** (Puppets in Gaspar-color).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Slatinay and George Pal
BENSHAM: Palladium June 7, 3 days
CARLISLE: Star June 21, 3 days
COCKERMOUTH: Grand June 7, 3 days
EASINGTON: Empire June 24, 3 days
GUISELEY: Picture House June 17, 3 days
MORDEN: Electric June 28, 3 days
PORTLAND: Regal June 14, 3 days
RUTHIN: Picture House June 24, 3 days
SOUTHAMPTON: Cinema June 3, 3 days
STOCKPORT: Curzon, Offerton June 14, 6 days

**And So to Work** (A comedy of early morning rising).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Richard Massingham
ALLOA: Central June 24, 3 days
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: Picture House, Jesmond June 3, 3 days
NOTTINGHAM: News House June 24, 3 days
TIBSHELF: Palace June 10, 3 days

**The Birthplace of America** (British origins of American pioneers).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* A. Moncrieff Davidson
ARMLEY: Pictodrome June 14, 3 days
BAWTRY: Palace June 14, 2 days
BRISTOL: Knowle June 24, 3 days
CHORLTON-CUM-HARDY: Rivoli June 24, 3 days
DARLESTON: Picturedrome June 21, 3 days
ECCLESHALL: Greystones June 3, 3 days
HULL: Londesboro' June 17, 3 days
LEEDS: Imperial June 24, 3 days
Shaftesbury June 10, 3 days
MIDDLETON: Palace June 28, 3 days
NEWCASTLE: Picture Palace June 9, 2 days
PRESTON: Palladium June 21, 6 days
ROCHDALE: Ceylon June 21, 3 days
Coliseum June 24, 3 days
TOTTINGTON: Palace June 17, 3 days

**Coal Face** (Poetic treatment of coal mining).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
*SOUND PRODUCTION:* Alberto Cavalcanti
ALEXANDRIA: Strand June 3, 3 days
GOLBORNE: Royal Pavilion June 10, 3 days
SHEFFIELD: Chantry June 17, 3 days
THURCROFT: Cinema June 7, 3 days
TOWYN: Cinema June 7, 3 days
WORTHING: Dome June 21, 6 days

**Cover to Cover** (Documentary of book production).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Alexander Shaw
ASHTON-UNDER-LYME: Pavilion June 10, 3 days
BARNSTAPLE: Gaumont Palace June 21, 3 days
CHEADLE HULME: Elysian June 17, 3 days
EASINGTON: Empire June 17, 3 days
GATESHEAD: Ravensworth June 24, 3 days
HAWORTH: Hippodrome June 28, 3 days
HILLSBORO: Kinema June 21, 6 days
HUDDERSFIELD: Waterloo June 10, 3 days
LEEDS: Abbey June 3, 3 days
PUDSEY: Picture House June 7, 3 days
SHEFFIELD: Park June 3, 3 days
STOCKPORT: Curzon, Offerton June 14, 6 days
TEIGNMOUTH: Riviera June 7, 3 days
WIGTON: Palace June 21, 3 days

**Dragon of Wales** (A travelogue attempting to tackle economic conditions).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* W. B. Pollard
HULL: Carlton June 17, 3 days
National June 7, 3 days
Playhouse June 24, 3 days
Savoy June 14, 3 days
NEWPORT: Cinema June 14, 6 days

**Fire Fighters** (Documentary of the London Fire Brigade).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Peter Colin
DEAL: Odeon June 28, 6 days
GLASGOW: Picture House, Sauchiehall Street June 28, 6 days
NOTTINGHAM: News House June 17, 3 days
RICHMOND: Richmond Theatre June 1, 6 days
TIBSHELF: Palace June 21, 3 days
TORQUAY: Electric June 7, 6 days

**Fishing Banks of Skye**
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
GREENWICH: Trafalgar June 12, 1 day
HOYLAKE: Winter Gardens June 14, 3 days
LITTLE SUTTON: Kings June 17, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Park Palace June 3, 3 days
RAINHAM: Royal June 10, 3 days

**Gentlemen in Top Hats and Gentlemen in Crowns** (Historical survey of European events for the past 40 years).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* A. B. Svensk Filmindustri
*ENGLISH VERSION:* Donald Taylor
COVENTRY: Gaumont Palace June 27, 1 day
OXFORD: Scala June 21, 3 days
TWICKENHAM: Twickenham Theatre June 1, 6 days

**How to be a Detective** (In the Benchley manner).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION and DIRECTION:* Robert Benchley
LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Road June 7, 6 days

**Key to Scotland** (Documentary of Edinburgh).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson
CHESTER: Tatler June 21, 6 days
DUNDEE: Vogue June 24, 3 days
HULL: National June 3, 3 days
NORTHWICH: Plaza June 28, 6 days

**Men Against the Sea** (Documentary of North Sea trawling).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Vernon Sewell
BRIERFIELD: New Star June 3, 3 days
CORBY: Odeon June 21, 3 days
DIDSBURY: Capitol June 7, 6 days

**Milestones** (The varying types to be seen in England).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* A. Moncrieff Davidson
ARMLEY: Western June 30, 1 day
BACUP: Regal June 14, 3 days
BAWTRY: Palace June 18, 2 days
BIRKENHEAD: Plaza June 21, 6 days
BRISTOL: Knowle June 7, 3 days
BUCKHAVEN: Globe June 9, 2 days
CARCROFT: Picture Palace June 25, 2 days
DARLINGTON: Plaza June 17, 3 days
GOLDTHORPE: Empire June 17, 3 days
HILLSBORO: Phoenix June 21, 3 days
HYDE: Queens June 14, 3 days
MIDDLETON: Palace June 14, 3 days
NORTH WALSHAM: Regal June 7, 3 days
PRESTON: Empress June 9, 4 days
RIPLEY: Empire June 21, 3 days
SCARBOROUGH: Londesboro' June 14, 3 days
SHEFFIELD: Norfolk June 24, 3 days
Wicker June 21, 6 days
SELBY: Central June 17, 3 days
THURNSCOE: Cinema June 21, 3 days
WIGAN: Princes June 14, 6 days

**Night Mail** (Documentary of the northward trip of the postal special).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Basil Wright and Harry Watt
BIRMINGHAM: Triangle June 24, 3 days
GRASSMOOR: Electric June 24, 3 days
MANCHESTER: Greenhill, Cheetham Hill June 24, 3 days
MOTTRAM: Savoy June 17, 3 days
LONDON: World News, Praed Street June 21, 3 days
OKEHAMPTON: Cinema June 7, 3 days
OLDHAM: Alhambra June 3, 3 days
RAINHAM: Royal June 3, 3 days
SACRISTON: Memorial June 27, 1 day
SHEFFIELD: Greystone June 10, 3 days
Manor June 3, 3 days
WHITTINGTON MOOR: Lyceum June 7, 3 days
WHITWICK: Palace June 17, 3 days

**Secret Hiding Places** (Priest holes to be found in English country houses).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Granville Squiers
BOURNEMOUTH: Premier News Theatre June 21, 3 days
GLASGOW: Kingsway June 24, 3 days
GOOLE: Tower June 10, 3 days
HULL: National June 17, 3 days
LEEDS: Regal, Crossgates June 24, 3 days
LONDON: Annexe, Islington June 17, 3 days
Cinema, Canning Town June 10, 3 days
ROCHDALE: Coliseum June 14, 3 days
SHEFFIELD: Globe, Attercliffe June 3, 3 days
Hillsboro' Park Cinema June 17, 3 days

**Statue Parade** (Historical treatment of London statues).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Road June 7, 6 days

**Vanishing Sails** (Story of the Medway sailing barge).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Steuart Films
*DIRECTION:* Ronald Steuart
DORCHESTER: Palace June 13, 1 day
SOUTHAMPTON: Cinenews June 3, 3 days

## Foreign Films

**Der Ammenkoenig** (German).
*DIRECTION:* Hans Steinhoff
LONDON: Studio One, Oxford Street June 1, indefinitely

**Burgtheater** (Austrian).
*SCENARIO and DIRECTION:* Willi Forst
*STARRING:* Werner Krauss
Olga Tschechowa
LONDON: Academy, Oxford Street June 1, indefinitely

**En Natt** (Swedish).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Sound City
OXFORD: Scala June 7, 3 days

**L'Equipage** (French).
*DIRECTION:* Anatole Litvak
*STARRING:* Annabella
Jean Murat
LONDON: Studio One, Oxford Street Following *Der Ammenkoenig*

**Fear** (Finnish).
*DISTRIBUTION:* National Provincial
*DIRECTION:* Stefan Zweig
OXFORD: Scala June 10, 3 days

**The Golem** (Czechoslovakian).
*DIRECTION:* Julien Duvivier
*STARRING:* Jean Gabin
LONDON: Forum, Villiers Street June 1, indefinitely

**De Kribbebijter** (Dutch).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Tobis
*PRODUCTION:* Holfi-Film
*DIRECTION:* Hermann Kosterlitz
Ernst Winar
*STARRING:* Louis Borel
OXFORD: Scala June 14, 3 days

**Musik im Blut** (German).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Tobis
OXFORD: Scala June 3, 3 days

**Pépé le Moko** (French).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* Julien Duvivier
*STARRING:* Jean Gabin
LONDON: Curzon June 1, indefinitely

**Thunder Over Mexico** (American).
*DISTRIBUTION:* International
*DIRECTION:* S. M. Eisenstein
OXFORD: Scala June 17, 3 days

world FILM news

# AMATEUR AND TECHNICAL SECTION

An Illustration of dramatic lighting from a Columbia Picture.

## £230 FOR AMATEUR SERVICE CLUB

## *THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL WORLD*

## HOW TO DESIGN AND BUILD SETS

CONTRIBUTORS

Andrew Buchanan
Evelyn Spice
Lionel H. Huitt
H. Chevalier

# FILMING BRITAIN—No. 2. By Evelyn Spice

## The Holiday Theme—Two Methods

ANY slice of Britain might form a background for a film about a holiday group, bent on seeing new places and leaving the cities for the countryside.

There are many ways in which we might plan a film of that kind. But here I shall outline just two of the many:

(1) The impressionistic method, covering much ground and presenting many people.

(2) The personal story, using a family or a group of friends and presenting them in story form against a countryside background.

*The Impressionist Method:* Let us suppose, for this film story, that it is a typical holiday week-end in London (or any other city for that matter). It is Saturday morning. At noon the great rush for the trains begins. Here the people, hurrying to catch a train, might be increased in numbers, in successive shots, until long queues are revealed. Engines, in a row, puff out smoke. Tickets are torn off large reels. Queues move forward. More people arrive, families, children, young couples.

Behind the scenes the ticket men and porters change duties, have a hurried cup of tea, etc., etc. On telephones extra coaches are ordered. Everywhere there is bustle and everywhere people are tried almost to the breaking point with excitement, tiredness, and the worry of getting away from town with the dog, the family, and themselves, all intact.

### Nerve-strain and Music

This part of the film must be played up to a great pitch of nervous tension. If sound is used the effect of strain on the nerves could be intensified by the use of music, or noise and din, and people trying to talk over the noise.

We have the tension worked up then, by such shots as a lost ticket and frantic telephone calls (which might make a small episode threaded through the departure sequence to heighten the tension), the lost dog, four people going from coach to coach trying to find four seats together, a man fumbling in his many pockets for his ticket, while other people wait restlessly behind him. This sequence might well end with the arrival of someone with the forgotten ticket just as the train begins to shunt out of the station.

The train moves out. This should be done to give a gradual easing of the tension, with rather a long shot, beginning slowly and quickening.

Faces out of the window as the coaches pass, people smile as they flash by, hands are waved. Chimneys and housetops flash past. The smoke of the city is left behind in three or four shots taken from the train, rooftops, a little bit of suburbia with a green spot here and there, open fields, a farmstead, green trees and grass everywhere.

People settle down to reading, watching the scenery, sorting their parcels, etc.

A cut from a person in the train to an animal in a farmyard gets us from the train to the country. From people having lunch, perhaps, to feeding-time on a farm. Here, since we are showing many places, and many people, is our opportunity to present part of the West of England, maybe, or any part of the country we choose. Six of the places in the west country, where people might go for holiday, would be quite enough. A farm in the hills, the city children among the animals. A Londoner spending a day in Oxford. Young people enjoying a week-end riding in the hills near Gloucester. Children picking daffodils in the woods, etc., etc., and finally, the sea. Just half a dozen shots of each spot, balancing them nicely so that at no time does the sequence tend to become a whole film about farming, riding, seasides, etc. Until the final sequence which, since it is to be the final one of the film, may be a bit longer, with longer shots, to slow up the movement a bit, and prepare the audience for the end of the film.

### Second Method

*A More Personal Story.* The second method is a more personal one. In it we must have a group of people who are our stars. Their story is the story of thousands of other holiday makers. Through them we want to convey the story as it might well happen to any of the thousands. As a background for them we use the station and later the countryside.

At the station there are crowds. But this time the camera discovers our people working their way through the throngs. They have trouble with the dog who doesn't want to be put into the baggage car. They finally find their seats after a lot of hurry and excitement.

The train moves off. This time the relief of actually being on their way, could be shown in the faces and attitude of the four people. Their gladness at getting into the country could be shown through the child.

The other people in the car are their immediate background and are shown in relation to our family or group. We spend more time on the train this time than in the previous film, because we want to introduce our people in close-ups to the audience, and make them interesting.

The countryside is seen from the train window. We reveal the passing scenery until we finally draw in at a station, with a shot taken from our travellers' viewpoint.

It is a small station, perhaps. There is someone to meet us. The train pulls away and goes off into the hills.

Here we have a choice of location for our people. They may stop at a village, a farm, the seaside. Since it is their story, we cannot very well go away and leave them while we roam about giving an impression of the whole countryside. We must present, through a local spot, something of the life which might go on anywhere in that part of the country.

The family, or group of friends, is the medium through which we reveal the life of the country people. If in a village, there are people there to get to know, and farms near by, fair days, no doubt, and the annual fête. If on a farm, there will be the local market day in the village nearby. If at the seaside, there are, if we want to wander a bit, small villages, and farms within a mile or so of the sea.

We might end the film in a dozen ways, from night falling over the countryside, to the small child of the party going to bed in a farm-house bedroom, while outside under the window an animal rubs itself against the gate.

## Kodachrome in Daylight

IN a letter printed last month, Mr. J. Masterton states: "When using Kodachrome in daylight it is inadvisable to use anything but flat lighting, as it is difficult to match shadows. In any shot on Kodachrome where there are heavy shadows, I have found they have a definite tendency to blue."

Well, this is not the first time I have had the same complaint about heavy shadows tending to blue on Kodachrome. But I'm sorry I cannot agree with "only using flat lighting," for one is so limited in choice of subject. Last month, I advocated the use of a haze filter to reduce the tendency to bluish shadows in various types of scenes. At the time of writing those notes, I had not read Mr. Masterton's letter, or I should have added a fifth use for the haze filter. Number Five would then read:—"to prevent an excess of blue in shadows, when scenes must be made in the shade."

The haze filter is extremely helpful in colour work and will allow latitude for contrast lighting. A haze filter is in fact an ultra-violet absorbing filter, and does not affect good resolution. It is helpful to remember the speed of Kodachrome is high, requiring a lens aperture of about one stop more than with ordinary panchromatic and two stops more than Super-Pan. Under bright summer conditions, the most useful lens stops are f. 8 and f. 5.6.

H. Chevalier.


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# £230 for Amateur Film Makers

## Amateur Service Club—First Group of Films for Production

THIS month we begin the great work of turning our amateur skill to good uses. There are a thousand causes to serve and we can do much for them. There are children's movements, youth movements and social movements of all kinds which require the helping hand of publicity. By making films on housing and health and town planning and activities of local government and the work of local research stations or local hospitals, we can further civic education on a nation-wide scale.

With a dozen professional film directors pledged to help every amateur who co-operates, there is no reason why this Amateur Services movement—with its vision of cinema in the service of the community—should not become a great national movement.

Money will not be the drawback it once seemed. Sponsors of all kinds are ready to give financial encouragement. Our Amateur Services Club in conjunction with WORLD FILM NEWS is mobilising it.

Amateurs have only to use the great opportunity which it presents to them. Here is a first list of awards open to amateurs.

### *The Films*

The Orient Line offers £50 for the best film of an ORIENT CRUISE made during the coming season.

★

The Gas, Light & Coke Company offer £20, £15 and £10 for films on PREVENTIVE HYGIENE or on THE PLANNED HOME.

★

Shell-Mex & B.P. Ltd. offer £20, £15 and £10 for films on THE BRITISH COUNTRYSIDE, and direct the attention of amateur script makers to their nine brilliant guides to the English countryside.

WORLD FILM NEWS, to do a turn for the cause represented by the Travel Association and the preservation work of the Office of Works, offer £20, £15 and £10 for films describing Britain's rich TREASURES OF ARCHITECTURE. Let us have fine records of the cathedrals and castles and homes of the country, done with knowledge and skill. Amateurs with their high standard of photography and their more studious minds, will surely do this sort of thing better than professionals.

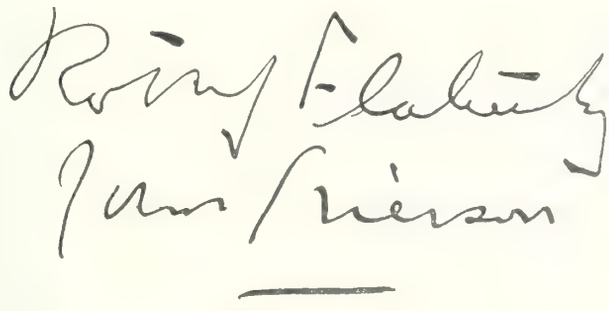
★

WORLD FILM NEWS also offers £20, £15 and £10 for films of the YOUTH HOSTEL MOVEMENT in Scotland. This is to help a fine cause which has not the funds available for all the publicity it deserves. WORLD FILM NEWS is, moreover, glad to do this service to its country of origin and to the many first-rate amateur film makers north of the border.

So far, then, £230. There will be a great deal more before we are finished.

Let us, therefore, make a quick start. We want amateurs all over the country—and many have already proved their skill—to join us in the most progressive and practical movement in amateur cinema.

***The Amateur Service Club was founded and is sponsored by:***



**The A.S.C. has been created to give professional aid on scripts, camera-work and production to all amateurs making films of a documentary or social character.**

**Miss Evelyn Spice (Director of *Weather Forecast* and *Calendar of the Year*) has been appointed organising secretary and chief adviser.**

**Andrew Buchanan (creator of Cinemagazine), Paul Rotha (producer and author of *The Film Till Now* and *The Documentary Film*), and Basil Wright (director of *The Song of Ceylon*) have been appointed as additional advisers.**

***Write to*:**
***Evelyn Spice, Amateur Service Club, Oxford House, Oxford Street, London, W.1.***

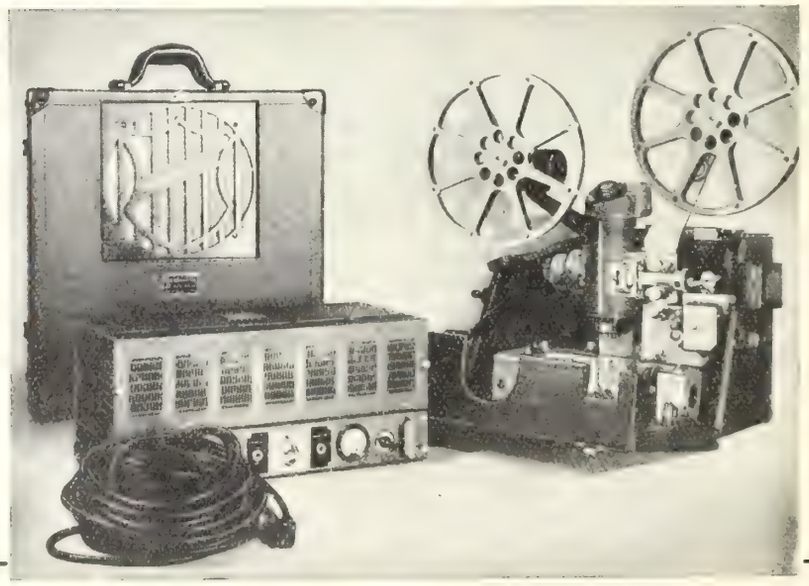
# THE ADVANTAGES OF NEW TOOLS

THE good workman never blames his tools, so they say. Why has this always been true?—because the good worker is a wise man and doesn't tolerate old tools when they can be replaced by new ones which will save time or money, and improve quality. Throughout the world, modern industry is progressing by adopting effective new tools. Such a tool is the Filmosound—leader in its class of talkie apparatus and the ideal instrument for use in the School, Lecture Room, Hall, Sales Office or the Home.

## FILMOSOUND

**MODEL 130 WITH 1000 WATT PROJECTION LAMP AND 25 WATT AMPLIFIER**

This 16 mm. equipment permits fully professional presentations of sound film subjects of any number of reels and employs either one or two 1000-watt Filmo Projectors. Illuminating power exceeds that of any other 16 mm. projector. 1600-ft. film capacity allows 45 minutes show. May be operated at 24 or 16 frames per second (for sound and silent films). Film take-up is by a separate motor, which also provides power for rapid film rewinding. Fitted with fast 2-inch F 1.65 lens instantly interchangeable with special lenses. Film is cooled and re-humidified. There is a radio interference eliminator, pilot light, snubber to cushion film against take-up tension, two-way tilt, variable lamp resistance and voltmeter. The amplifier is a high fidelity reproducing unit, with high power output, normally 25 watts, with peaks reaching a value of 75 watts. Thus great sound volume is available without a trace of distortion. Nine shielded tubes of latest type are used in amplifier and one in speaker case. Control of Filmosound 130, whether used with one or two projectors, is from amplifier control panel. Provision made for starting and stopping either projector, and for quick change-over of sound and picture from one projector to the other. Line voltage, film sound volume, microphone volume, and tone are also controlled from this panel.



★

*Other Filmosound Models*

★

### 138 FILMOSOUND

Of typical Bell-Howell quality, this apparatus is housed in a single case, has a capacity of 1,600 ft. and provides 45 minutes continuous show. Among the special features that recommend Filmosound 138 are the following: New sound head incorporates a rotating sound drum, fly wheel and float idler. Voltages, exciter and photocell are balanced automatically with changes in volume control. Amplifier tubes are of new metal type. Convenient one-hand tilt device. With 750 watt lamp for sound and silent films.

### 120 FILMOSOUND

Contained in carrying case and having its own blimp, this model has 750 watt illumination of picture and 18 watts undistorted output from powerful amplifier. Perfect co-ordination of picture and sound. Electric governor ensures constant speed. Gives talkies for an audience as large as 2,000.

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# AMATEUR CLUB AND FILM SOCIETY NEWS

**ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Howard Cricks, Esq., 35 Russell Square, W.C.1.

The Committee and Sub-committees of the Kinematograph Section are engaged on a number of developments. A Federation of Amateur Producing Societies has been formed, further particulars of which will soon be published.

Another Sub-committee is busy on arrangements for the Exhibition of Kinematography and the concurrent Film Competition, to be held in November. For the first time, the Competition will probably include a class for 35 mm. films.

**THE DARTINGTON HALL FILM UNIT** has begun work on three new educational films. An animated film on *Springs and Wells*, a film on the British Timber Industry, and a film on Pastoral Nomadism, based on material from the Russian film *Turksib*. A unit is going to Norway in the summer, where it will obtain material for films on the village life of the fjords, for the timber film, and for a film on the natural regions and human geography of Norway. Most of these films will be available for distribution through Visual Education between September and December. Their productions last year in Derbyshire and the Canary Islands have been purchased by the L.C.C. and the Glasgow Education Committee. Film Officer, William Hunter, The School, Dartington Hall, Totnes, S. Devon.

**ELTHAM CINE SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Miss V. D. White, 36 Craigton Road, S.E.19.

The Society is now in its third year, and recently celebrated its second birthday by a gala performance in its miniature theatre at the studio. Various celebrities in the film world, and representatives from London amateur film clubs, were in attendance.

During its two years of existence, the Eltham Cine Society has produced some fourteen films, both short and full-length.

Work has now commenced on the Society's new production, *The Emperor's New Clothes*, in sound and natural colour. It will not be completed until after the summer.

**ACE MOVIES:** Hon. Secretary, Channon Wood, Esq., 15 Openview, S.W.18. Studio, 90 High Street Mews, Wimbledon, S.W.19.

Stacks of timber, linoleum and three-ply, bags of plaster, cans of paint, rolls of paper; all these, almost blocking access to the studio, indicate activity within the Ace camp. The first set for the mystery production is under construction. It is a cathedral interior, and according to Art Director Fowler, is in the rococo style of architecture. The construction department would have preferred a Methodist Chapel in the later corrugated style, but—Art must be served.

The cast is not yet finally selected, Director West having had some difficulty over types. There appears to be a vacancy for a male juvenile lead—handsome and slightly sunburned—and any aspirant to film fame who feels he complies with these conditions should get in touch with the secretary at once. The sunburn can, if necessary, be supplied.

Ace Movies would like to state that these monthly notes in the *World Film News* are bringing in more enquiries—and from the right sort of people—than any two other papers devoting similar space to Amateur production.

**FILM AND PHOTO LEAGUE:** Hon. Secretary, H. Cuthbertson, Esq., 3 Somerset Terrace, London, W.C.1.

On May 3rd, Arthur Elton, of Associated Realist Film Producers, spoke on "Film-making." "The first object of your film," he said, "is to tell a story: do not be lyrical. Make films of things you understand and let your film have a purpose." Mr. Elton went on to say that the intelligent use of a cine camera can be mastered in a very short time, and the advent of sound need not be witheld much longer from the practice of sub-standard cinematography.

Many of these points were well illustrated by the projection of *City Life of New York*, a film in Kodachrome colour, and the lecturer's own documentary *Housing Problems*.

A lengthy discussion on sound-recording, film-emulsions and other technical problems followed, the audience taking part.

In moving a vote of thanks, the Chairman spoke of the great scope before the League in the building up of a "Left Film Front" through the co-ordination of amateur efforts all over the country. The League's latest film *March Against Starvation* is worthy of a place among documentary film achievements. A film of *May Day*, against the background of contemporary national and international events, is now in production, for June release.

**WOLVERHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY:** Programme Secretary, E. L. Packer, Esq., Himley Crescent, Wolverhampton. Membership Secretary, Miss D. Roston, 60 Great Brickkiln Street, Wolverhampton.

The Society has just completed its second year with a slightly adverse balance sheet. As this is apparently quite common in the early stages of a Society's development, the Committee are not pessimistic about the future, but are already making plans for next season. Final programme in March consisted of *Mediæval Village*, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, *Remous*, and *L'Hippocampe*. The next meeting is in October.

**MANCHESTER AND SALFORD FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, R. Cordwell, 13 Milwain Drive, Heaton Chapel, Nr. Manchester.

This Society was formed at Milton Hall, Manchester, on May 6th, following the dissolution of the Manchester and Salford Workers' Film Society. The latter had suffered a loss of £21, and were not in a position to carry on—but recommended that efforts should be made to re-establish a Film Society in Manchester, and that all their material, knowledge and assistance would be placed at the disposal of any new Society that might be formed.

Since its formation in 1930, the Manchester and Salford Workers' Film Society has given some 45 programmes, showing films representative of 13 countries.

A successful inaugural meeting launched the new Society. £20 was immediately forthcoming by guarantors, and several subscriptions paid in advance.

**INVERNESS FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, John Mitchell, Esq., Royal Bank Buildings, Inverness.

*World Film News* learns with regret that owing to inadequate public support of this Society, the question of dissolution is being considered.

**BRIGHTON, HOVE AND DISTRICT FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY** (Branch of the British Film Institute): Hon. Secretary, C. Walker, "Eskdale," Old Shoreham Road, Southwick, Sussex.

The first film show of the season took place at the Theatre Royal on May 23rd. The programme was headed by *Remous*, French drama directed by Edmond Greville, starring Jean Galland and Jeanne Boitel, and distributed by Denning. Pending upon the success of this show will be the decision to carry on monthly shows of a similar nature throughout the winter season.

**OXFORD FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, E. F. Bowtell, 105 Victoria Road, Oxford.

Fritz Lang's *Fury* was shown at the first meeting of the Summer season, held on Sunday, May 2nd, at the Scala Cinema. In support were Robert Benchley's *How to Behave*, and Anstey's *Enough to Eat?*—an examination into the problem of malnutrition among the working classes of this country.

At the meeting on May 23rd, Pudovkin's *The Deserter* was supported by *Papageno*—a Lotte Reiniger silhouette film. June 6th, *Der Schimmelreiter* will be presented, together with another Benchley comedy, *How to Vote*, and Massingham's *And So to Work*, described in the April issue of *W.F.N.*

**WEST ESSEX FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, F. J. Philpott, 7 Wellington Road, East Ham, E.6.

A number of scenarios submitted by members were considered at the April monthly meeting, and Mr. S. Reed's *The Pot of Basil* was selected for the next production, shooting of which is shortly to commence.

At a recent meeting, Mr. Ternouth of Messrs. Kodak, Ltd., gave an address on "Kodachrome," illustrated by stills.

The lighting equipment at the studio, 41a Kempton Road, East Ham, E.6., has been increased to 15,000 watts.

## A Letter

If you know of any amateurs who are making or thinking of making a pacifist film on the lines suggested in Andrew Buchanan's article in the April *W.F.N.*—or for that matter on any lines, so long as its aim is to promote peace, please would you let me know. I am a member of the Peace Pledge Union, and it may be possible to co-operate in trying to give public performances of pacifist-films in Town or Church Halls.

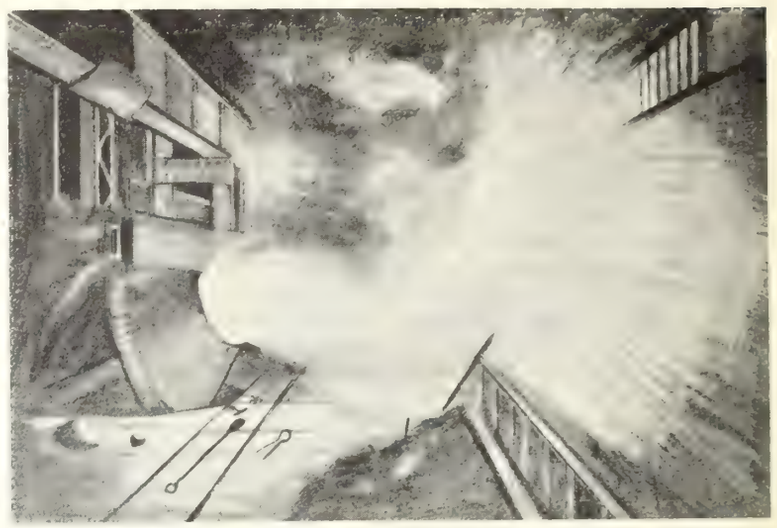
Finally, may I express my appreciation of *W.F.N.*—it is the only paper I know which has as its *raison d'être* one subject (film), but holds an intelligent attitude towards, and even gives space to, other subjects (broadcasting, music, etc.).

I. W. BRADBERY

# HOW TO DESIGN AND BUILD SETS

*By H. Chevalier, F.P.S., A.S.E.*

*This is the first of a unique series of articles on set-building by a film journalist who has had considerable experience of practical studio work*



**A. Sketch showing the inside of a steel-mill during the blowing of the pot, and part of the explosion**

SINCE launching my technical notes, I have given considerable thought to the many problems confronting amateur cinematographers. From observations of the technique employed in production of substandard films, one point requiring attention stands out with remarkable clarity—"Settings."

Badly designed or haphazardly constructed sets predominate in amateur films. Floating columns or pillars cheated about the set show only too well how little is known in amateur circles about the science of cinematography.

Starting from this basis, it will be my endeavour to guide you in the preparation of correctly designed settings, suitable to the action of a selected movie plot. At the moment, with armaments the predominating feature of the workaday world, a plot has been written around "Sabotage in Steel."

*THE STORY IN BRIEF*

The action is grouped around the plot to wreck a large steel works by an unknown agency. The scene opens in the kitchen of a dilapidated house in a midland town. Continues in the steel works when an explosion occurs while the molten steel is being poured into the moulds. Fire breaks out following the explosion, the action then taking place behind the pall of smoke and burning buildings.

Then a meeting in the alley—the man who resisted and what happened to him. The final meeting and exposure in the kitchen of the broken-down house.

Thus we require four settings designed to allow the dramatic action full play: (1) An interior of the kitchen; (2) Interior of a steel mill with hot metal being poured into moulds; (3) A sinister alley-way exterior; (4) A fire setting.

Our predominating problem is the production of the spectacular scenes, divided into three sections, viz: Pouring molten metal; Explosion during that operation; The subsequent fire. On the first examination, all three appear beyond the limits of both pocket and camera. You may quite rightly say, "We cannot afford to build large sets to produce the desired effect, or shoot the atmosphere shots of a steel mill in action."

## Use of models

Naturally, but if you find it impossible to shoot the interiors in a steel mill itself, you can proceed on the same lines as the studios and fake the shots by using models. To build models we require drawings, so our procedure is to sketch the scene in detail, exactly how we imagine it would appear when the action takes place. Basing our ideas on authentic material, we sketch a steel mill, when they are "blowing a 25 ton heat of steel," a scene allowing plenty of background for our dramatic action. From sketch A, one can see how spectacular it will appear, and our next step is the preparation of a scale drawing and from the drawing, our model. The model shown in B is built to a given perspective, in other words the model is not an accurate reproduction of the authentic mill, but built to give the required camera angle. A 1/8th scale is employed, the materials consisting of odd pieces of three-ply zinc and deal. If the main girders of the steel mill are 20 ft. high, the model will be 1ft. 3in. high by 3ft. 6in. at the wide end, and 10in. wide at the narrow end.

To assist the photographic qualities, the scene is painted in shades of grey, using black only for shadows that cannot otherwise be obtained. A low camera angle is selected and the lighting carefully arranged on the right hand side of the model to give a scene approximating closely Sketch A minus the scattering of molten metal. Touch up any high lights with very light grey, almost white, and we are all set. Inside the crucible or metal pot we then place two sticks of Golden Rain firecracker, and as there is no bottom to the pot, we can adjust them carefully to give the desired effect without appearing in the picture.

## Ready to shoot

We are now ready to shoot, but first set the camera speed to 32 pictures, p.s., and load with Super Sensitive Pan. Then light the fuses and run the camera until the firecracker gives out. Rewind the film, set off two more firecrackers and expose the film a second time to give greater effect of authenticity, but exposing at one stop less.

While the second or double exposure is being made two flash bombs previously placed in the pits marked F are ignited by tapers from below the model, which is set across a couple of trestles. The flash bombs produce the necessary explosion, timed exactly as required, and the first two spectacles are completed. If one desires a touch of added realism, a couple of lead toy figures can be added in the foreground when they will appear in silhouette, but don't forget to pull them over backwards by thin pieces of black thread when the explosion occurs. For the fire setting, we "revamp" or rebuild the model in the following manner. Cut out the centre portion of the right hand wall jaggedly with a penknife or chisel, leaving plenty of splintery bits sticking out from each side. Move the camera around to a point opposite the opening, subsequently arranging the lighting that, while correctly illuminating the model, will leave this wall in black shadow painting the wall black if necessary.

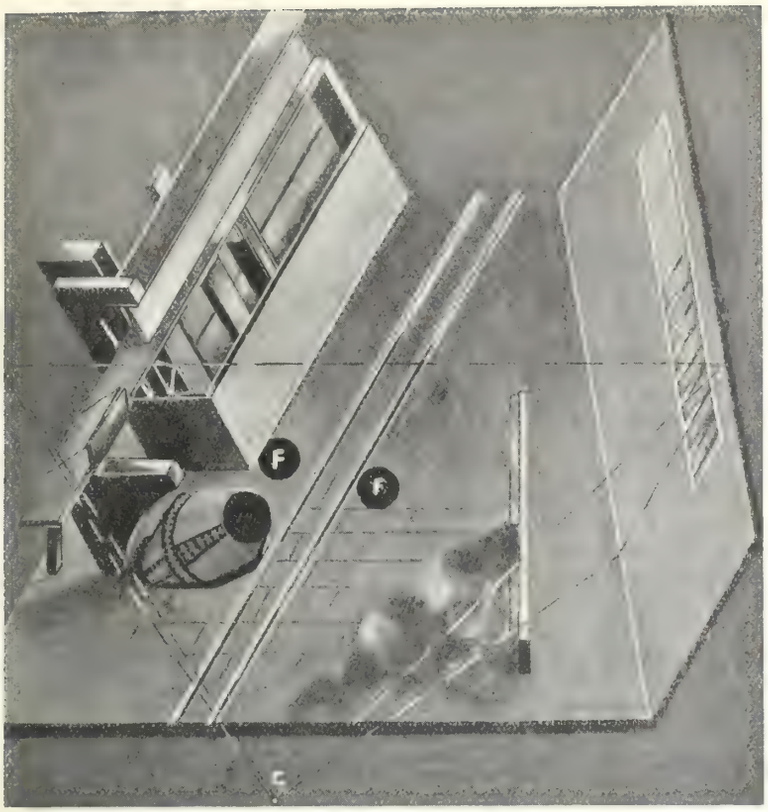
Then cover the opening on the outside with a piece of thick black paper that has been scored with a razor blade down either side about one inch from the edge. Fasten the paper to the wall securely by means of two strips of wood lath and also fasten a piece of thin twine to the top centre edge of the paper with strips of gummed paper. When ready to shoot set another flash bomb in the pit nearest the wall, then carefully sprinkle the wood representing the girders, etc., with petrol, using it very sparingly.

When all set, light the fuse on the flash bomb and the instant the flash occurs, pull the string ripping the paper completely out of the opening, at the same time igniting the petrol with a long taper. Shoot this scene at 16 pictures a second on Super Pan, taking enough footage to show the wall being blown out by the explosion and the place set on fire from the molten metal. If shot correctly this will appear very spectacular on the screen, but remember, shoot it in the open and extinguish the flames with Wet Sand.

*THE EXTERIOR ALLEYWAY*

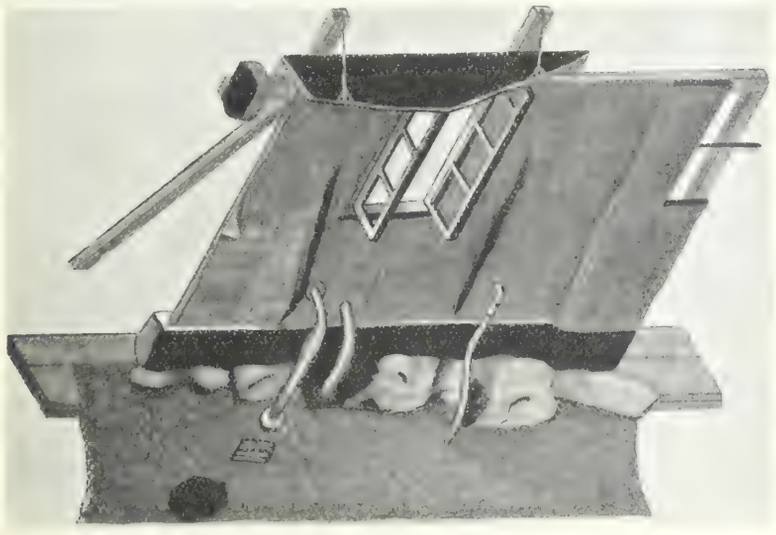
The alleyway is a simple job, for only one wall is required, approximately 12 ft. long by 9 ft. high with a window set 5 ft. from the ground. As I see it, an alleyway suggests cobblestones, offset by large pieces of rock outcropping on which the house may stand, giving data on which to design our sketch of the completed set, as shown in drawing C.

The wall is constructed from 1/8th three-ply of the cheapest variety, nailed to rough 3 by 2 deal battens. The casement window, not made to close, is therefore only a rough representation of a window made from rough 2 by 1 deal nailed together. Glazing consists of thin 16 oz. drawn sheet window glass held in by small pins, and don't make the mistake of cleaning the panes. The dirtier they appear the better. Mix a batch of Plaster of Paris taking care not to make it too wet, then proceed to daub the board with the plaster, starting from the ground level, painting the board with a solution of painters' size immediately beforehand.




**B. Reproduction of model for steel-mill, giving camera angle and lens centre (c) and (f) (f), the explosion chambers**

*Scale* $\frac{1}{8}$" *to* 1 *ft.*



**C. Alley-way set built for the shadow sequence**

*Scale* $\frac{1}{2}$" *to* 1 *ft.*

Incidentally, the set is raised up on two sets of builders' planks, for the cobbles, later. Don't take any great care in applying the plaster, daub it on any old how, the rougher the better. It gives atmosphere.

Along the lower edge add an extra thick layer of plaster about 1 ft. high, painting the whole wall when dry with painters' size. Next, lay a double layer of Hessian 4 ft. wide along the whole length wall, nailing it down with carpet nails. This presents a surface higher at the base of the wall than a foot or so away, giving a step appearance that can be used to advantage. See that the Hessian is pulled tight when nailing down and on the surface smack down lumps of wet plaster, irregularly in varying shapes and sizes to represent cobblestones, building up the rock outcroppings by first laying down empty boxes or tins as a foundation to save plaster, when shaping their irregular outline. For the pipes, use odd bits of piping, and either fake the grating or use a genuine one.

Now paint the wall light grey, the base black and the cobbles dark grey, painting the window frame, the pipes and grating a dull black. Fix the lighting to cast the shadows as shown in C, painting in the high lights with light grey, on the pipes, etc., or emphasising the black shadows with black paint.

The action takes place offset. Only the shadows of figures meeting can be observed, thrown on the wall by the moonlight. The attack on the man who resisted and his fall are all mimed in grotesque form to produce that dramatic atmosphere so necessary to the success of the plot.

The set is also used in other scenes in the film, that do not concern us here. Unfortunately, space will not permit the completion of our settings this month, they will be continued next month with details of the kitchen set, camera angles and lighting explanations.

Meanwhile write and tell me how you like or dislike this new series, presented for the first time in any magazine in the world.

## *The Cold Light Illuminant*

There are several types of optical systems employed by the various manufacturers of 35 mm. and 16 mm. projectors. By this, we are not to be confused with the sound head optical system, but only by that part of the machine known as the cold light illuminant.

The light from the projector lamp has to be focussed down to the film gate aperture and the manner in which it is done is the basis of the discussion.

Some projectors employ the direct beam system, others use mirrors, condensers or prisms, some use pre-focussed lamps, others adjustable, whilst others use a combination of both, and so forth.

But on the choice of projector lamps, obviously the pre-focussed type offers the best advantages both as regards light and manipulation. The adjustable type are unsatisfactory for several reasons, every time a lamp is changed it has to be focussed up, and in addition to the fact that moving a very hot bulb about is anything but a pleasant operation, there is the question of reaching the proper focal point that gives the correct even field of projected light on the screen.

The precise positioning of the filaments of the pre-focussed types in respect of the lamp base is accomplished through the use of an accurate centering ring and precision socket or lock, eliminates the troubles encountered with the adjustable type. The mirror and prism types not only reduce light transmission efficiency but introduce other intricate adjustments that call for frequent adjustments, cleaning and part replacements.

One projector lamp manufactured by Philips has a mirror enclosed within the bulb of the pre-focussed filament, in which no cleaning is necessary and no adjustments to make.

Lamps of higher wattage should be efficiently air-cooled, a blower is necessary to ensure long life.

## *Screen Flicker*

Screen flicker depends primarily on the number of times per second that the projector shutter interrupts the light beam. The greater the number of interruptions, the less the flicker, and depending upon the design of the shutter, more or less light is allowed to be passed to the screen.

The shutter interruptions differ considerably on different makes of projectors. On the Bell & Howell Filmosound model for instance the shutter interruptions occur 78 times per second, on the De Vry 48 times, yet there is hardly anything to choose on the question of flicker between the two, and the light values are comparably good when considering the discrepancy in light values. The B. & H. 1000-watt type, however, has the highest foot-candle record, giving the more brilliant picture without any trace of flicker on 24 or 16 picture speeds compared with any other machine in the world.

This will prove that the shutter design plays the important part in the elimination of flicker of which there are several types. There are single bladed, two and three bladed disc shutters, some are perforated to allow more light to pass, there is also the barrel or drum type. The latter, in my opinion do not provide a uniform distribution of light to the screen due to the necessity of having to place the condenser a considerable distance from the aperture, thus reducing the light efficiency.

D. M.

# EQUIPMENT—CRITICISMS AND ADVICE

*The intermittent movement principle; buying a screen; sound efficiency*

## By David Myers

**(our new technical expert)**

There has been a tendency of late on the part of certain 16 mm. manufacturers to introduce into sub-standard machines the intermittent movement principle, i.e. a movement consisting of a cross and cam action to draw the film into the projection aperture, such as is employed for all 35 mm. projectors.

Sweeping claims are made regarding the superiority of this type of movement, but one has to be sceptical regarding its application to 16 mm.

Because of its smaller size and greater screen magnification, accurate positioning of each individual picture is absolutely essential, much more so than in the case of 35 mm. As no doubt past owners of such equipment will admit, a slight but increasing vertical picture jump becomes apparent as the machine wears—this must be so.

So observe when buying this type of machine that the projected picture is dead-steady on the screen, and make allowances for decimal wear on the cross and cam which will definitely give you the "vertijumps" sooner or later, plus the expense of intricate part replacements.

Shuttle and claw movements are more satisfactory, they ensure silent operation and long life. One-piece shuttles have advantages over the multiple component types because of the large number of varying surfaces. When it becomes necessary to provide adjustments to compensate for wear, slight "play" at one or more of the various wearing points would result in an accumulated variation which would cause screen unsteadiness.

### Claw Movements

Claw movements, whilst better in some respects than the intermittent cross-action, move in a path which is not accurately parallel with the aperture plate and this action is liable to produce rather rapid strain in the perforations. Unsteady pictures because of inaccurate location of the claw bearing points are quite common.

But I am afraid that it would be a difficult proposition to find a machine that provides all the refinements that I have in mind, but only by the pooling of collective practical experience can it ever be hoped eventually to arrive at a safe standard.

For instance, look at the constant damage being done to film by the use of stationary sound drums? These cause rapid wear due to the film rubbing over the stationary metal. Film joints or split perforations, oil and dirt will also cause subsequent variation in the pitch of the reproduced sound. Shrinkage or kinks in the film cause inevitable variations too, and shrinkage of film is one of the serious drawbacks to sub-standard.

Go seriously too into the type of film gate, casual examination might reveal what is termed side tension, but it is probably useless for film preservation if surface tension is also applied, since surface plates or runners introduce the hazard of rapid film wear.

★

The choice of a cinema screen calls for some consideration, durability combined with efficiency being foremost if the screen is to be of the portable type.

There are types manufactured for every purpose, for rear and front projection, perforated rubber and porous net for sound. Silver, gold, glass beaded, opaque, linen, and even plaster for silent films, and for sound too where the loud speakers are usually placed at the side or underneath the screen.

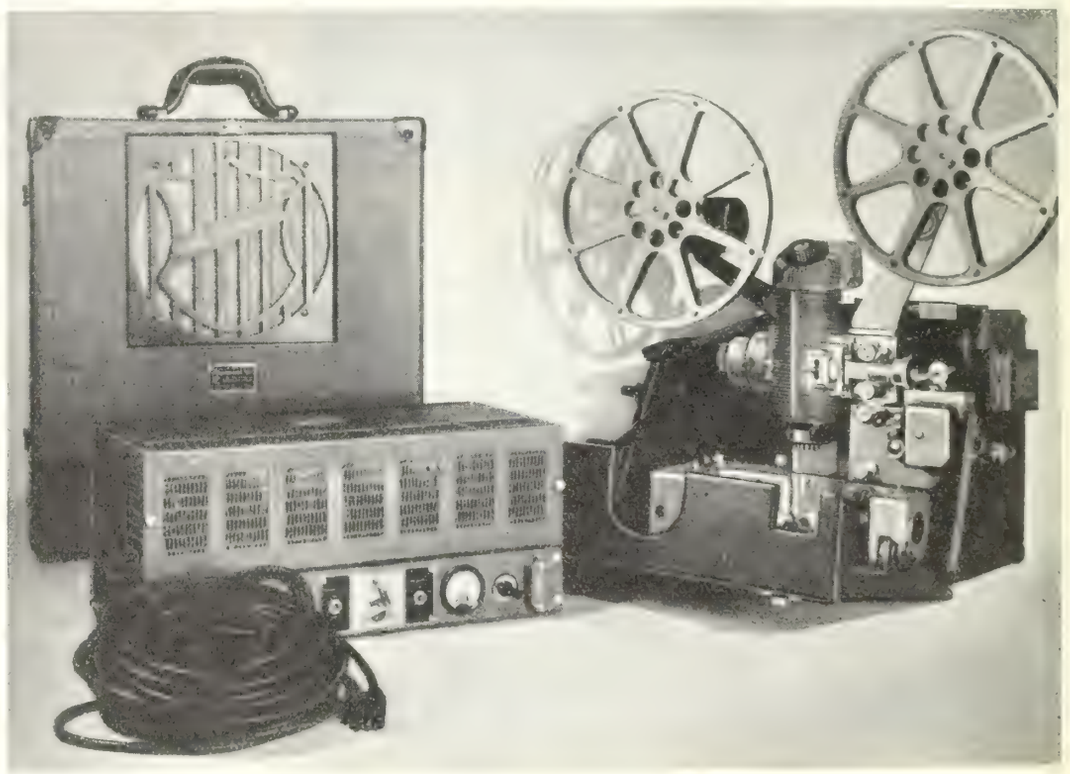
The type most suitable for non-theatrical use is undoubtedly the "portable" which can be obtained in dustproof boxes that require no more than a single hand-lift to erect them ready for use, these are made up in sizes up to twelve feet by nine feet in silver, glass beaded or plain white.

You should note that the height of a screen should be threequarters of its width, remember too that if your hall is wide there is nothing to beat a plain white screen as the light values fall off very considerably when viewing the screen from the side on silver, less so on glass beaded, but hardly at all on a plain white surface.

Screens are made seamless up to twelve feet width on other than perforated screens, and the latter are not suitable for rolling up. Pay strict attention to the canvas material and dope, it may be liable to stretch, crease or crack after little use. Ask the question "Can it be readily and successfully cleaned, and at what cost?"

Equally important is the lifting mechanism which is responsible for lifting and lowering the screen into its housing, this should be very, very robust and accurate to no small degree.

Such screens are obtainable from Messrs. R. F. Hunters Ltd., and The Perforated Front Projection Screen Co. Ltd., and others.



**Bell & Howell's 1000 Watt Filmosound outfit.**

## Speed Control—The Secret of Good Sound

The Bell & Howell products are known the world over for their exceptional reliability and performance. There are several models to choose from, and the only difference between them is that the more costly models have more refinements, but actually mechanically and electrically there is nothing between them. Like a watch, they present precision in the full sense of the word, they have a backing and guarantee that no one else offers—i.e. indefinite, and the sound is persistently maintained at a high degree of efficiency. There are reasons for this good sound, an intricate but efficient speed control is built into the motor circuit which maintains constant speed and rules out that unfortunate wobble and "wowyness" that one is so unfortunately acquainted with on several other 16 mm. makes.

Every known refinement is incorporated in these projectors plus complete originality in almost every way, what more could be desired than the limit of screen brilliance and undistorted speech output of 25 watts of really good sound?

The exciter lamp operating on a frequency of 20,000 cycles rules out any hum possibility from this source, and the amplifier is capable of reproducing recorded frequencies from 40 to 9,000 cycles. At a recent test with a photometer, twenty-two foot candles were recorded in the centre of the screen on a projector throw of nearly thirty feet, and the fall off in light values to the outer edges of the screen was only fractional.

In a recent rush to supply outfits for the world market, two thousand outfits were turned out in the works in one month! If this is any indication of the growing popularity of these machines, then it is surely a guidance for your reference.

# *Equipment (cont.)*

## The G.B. "N" type

This compact efficient outfit requires little introduction. On the merits of actual performance it has found its way on to several of H.M. Battleships—where the "N" stands first and foremost for the "Navy." H.M.S. "Hood" tops the naval list and the "Queen Mary," the passenger service.

Fitted into fireproof and weatherproof cases, each unit weighs something less than one cwt., easy to handle and fit up.

Two thousand feet capacity spool boxes are employed allowing for 20 minute runs, a bi-plane projection lamp is used for screen illumination, and the light is reasonably good.

The mechanism is silent in running, being totally enclosed, the film threading operation is simple but requires infinite care if faulty starts and subsequent film damage are to be avoided.

It employs a long gate which ensures a steady picture, and is adaptable for both front and rear projection.

The amplifier is compact and provides an undistorted output of twelve watts, comprising a three stage unit assembled on a cast aluminium frame with a meter panel. The latter provides a ready guide for efficiency or failure of the valves. A moving coil loudspeaker of special construction is employed.

The projector, being entirely enclosed, is at a disadvantage where long hours of continuous projection are necessary. The building up of the heat within the enclosed space is quite considerable, and cannot help to maintain the film in first-class condition to say the least, but nevertheless the "N" type portable is a powerful contender for first place on the British market.

## Philips 35mm. portable

The Philips 35mm. transportable sound film reproducer and projector represents in my opinion the Rolls Royce of the non-theatrical apparatus. It incorporates practically every known refinement and is singularly original in its design having several outstanding advantages over other makes. It is robust in construction, silent running, and should last for many years without mechanical part replacement. It loads 3,000 feet of film, it employs a unique illuminant of great power that gives a good picture up to throws of 110 feet—a 50 watt amplifier incorporating a gramophone reproducer and provision for microphones. It is simple and quickly set up for operation: it is adaptable for input voltages varying from 85 to 285 alternating current and will operate off any lighting circuit as the operating load is only 5.5 amps on a 230 volt supply.

An original system of speed control is incorporated. A pair of electrical tickers operating a resistance in series with the driving motor, maintains constant speed notwithstanding any variation in the mains voltage or frequency or both. A five-way control in the amplifier allows for ample tone correction for acoustical changes, etc., and sound from film or gramophone is high grade. H.M.S. "Emerald" after three years in the East India Station was returned to home waters recently with a "Philips" that had been running some three hours daily under extreme tropical conditions. Although the insulation had perished to a degree of instability, it was still reproducing good sound and was mechanically intact, a credit to the boys in blue. This is but one example of the performance under most exacting conditions.

# *Correct Use of Diffusers*

Amateurs often envy the professional's work, and make all manner of excuses, as to why they themselves cannot produce similar results.

Both, however, have the same basic requirements: negative stock and a lens. Logically, only by using the lens to the best advantage can you obtain high quality results. In the endeavour to obtain the greatest possible assistance from your lens the following hints will be of importance, technically.

In the studios, matting and diffusing are two of the greatest helpmates of the cameraman. Diffusing as suggested by its name consists of introducing diffusion between lens and subject, consisting of various qualities of ordinary gauze.

Gauze is sold in various degrees of coarseness, thus by introducing a frame of fine gauze immediately in front of the lens a hazy, foggy atmosphere will be introduced into the scene. By varying the quality of gauze, one can vary the degree of diffusion from thick fog to a slight mistiness in a dramatic scene.

For variation in appeal of a shot, one can cut out portions from the centre of the gauze, making absolutely sure beforehand to stretch the gauze uniformly to its maximum limit. In the forest sets of Warner's *Midsummer Night's Dream* diffusion of this type heightened the beauty of the setting, almost beyond belief, considering the simplicity of the method employed. For this type of shot the gauze is dyed black, but if a ghostly effect be required, use white gauze with a large enough hole in the centre to give a margin of lens safety (in case the actor moves too quickly in panning). When developed, a hazy detached margin will appear around the frame-edge with the actor clear cut in the centre.

A word of warning, use diffusion with intelligence, not just for an effect and "hang the picture." For example, to intensify the ghost shot, shoot the scene outdoors in the daylight,

**"Midsummer Night's Dream"**

using panchromatic film and a red filter. The red filter will darken the sky and make the face appear bloodless if a reddish tint is applied to the face and hands. With the camera still running, swap filters, this time using a green one. The scene changes instantly to a flash back when the ghost was a live man. The green filter reveals the actor in all the details of his make-up ; his face has now a swarthy look, his clothes are lighter, the scene a pleasant summer landscape, and you will be surprised at the correction the green filter will impart to the sky.

Another swap, and the red filter reverses the process. Thus, by quickly inserting several whole frames of gauze in varying progressive thicknesses the scene slowly fades. H. CHEVALIER.

## Problem of Distortion

Warner's cameraman, Hal Mohr, is responsible for an ingenious adaptation to motion picture photography of a device well-known in still camera work from its earliest days.

Assigned to photograph *Bullets or Ballots* and *Green Pastures*, he discovered that both scripts contained scenes with background and foreground action occurring in the same set-up, and that to retain the full dramatic value of these scenes it was essential that both zones of action should be in sharp focus.

Mohr recalled that when he worked with a still camera it was a simple matter to get a near and distant object in focus simultaneously by swinging the ground-glass of the camera in relation to the lens. (Fig. 1).

As this method was not practicable with a film camera owing to the complicated gate mechanism Mohr set about devising a means of swinging the lens on a vertical axis relative to the plane of the film which would produce the same result.

In co-operation with the studio mechanical department he designed a mount on the ball and socket principle which permitted of the lens being swivelled several degrees in either direction about its optical centre. (Fig. 2). The problem of distortion was overcome by using a Leica Sumar lens which has an approximate coverage of twice

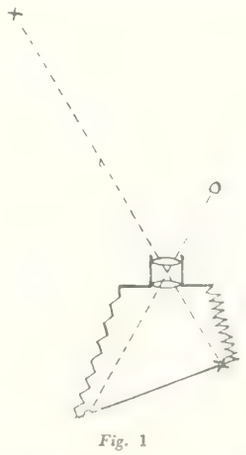


*Fig. 1*

*Fig. 2*

the width of a film frame. A further refinement was the fitting of a control operable from outside the camera blimp.

It will be fairly obvious that this lens does not claim to be a universal focus lens in the true sense of the term, i.e. producing a pin-sharp image of everything from a few feet to infinity. It could be better described as a diagonal focus lens, as to take advantage of its properties the action to be covered must be laid on a diagonal from the back to the front of the set; the focus on either side of this diagonal falling away in the normal manner.

**The marvellous news-reel pictures**

**of the**

*Coronation in the Abbey*

**were made possible by the use of**

**KODAK**

# SUPER X

## NEGATIVE

**(SPECIALLY TREATED)**

**Kodak Limited is proud to have co-operated with all concerned in the making of this splendid record of the great event.**

# SHATTER THE ILLUSION! by Andrew Buchanan

## *"Film-making is not for millionaires only"* *(No. 9 of the Series)*

THE majority of film-makers, professional and amateur, are inclined to accept, too readily, the established formula for production—to regard the traditional types of film story as the only types and to consider vast studios essential in the making of good films. Originality in film-making must always be dependent on an ability to analyse ideas and to build them up sanely and logically in terms of film. A film treatment which does not reach a high standard in these respects must be immediately rejected. Sane reasoning is as important in film-making as good technique. The importance of the latter is seldom underestimated and the importance of the first is rarely stressed. There is a tendency amongst film-makers to neglect the wood for the trees.

Throughout our analysis of this complex art we have been slowly but surely breaking down traditions that are generally accepted. Now we are arriving at a clearer and a more definite form of approach to production. We have realised that the truly creative director who can co-ordinate all the various energies necessary in the making of a film is comparatively scarce. We have discovered that a big studio is not essential in the making of a great picture. We have even dared to question the value of dialogue and to ask whether it should form an integral part of motion picture. This last inquiry led us back to the basic principle of film—the narrating of stories by means of moving images. This basic principle is denied by allowing the dialogue to tell the story. The evolution of the silent into the talking film is often considered "progress," but the silent film is not dead. It is not only alive but it forms the foundation upon which the talking-film has built itself.

### Stick to images

The emphasis on dialogue tends to force the images to play second fiddle, the size of that fiddle being immediately apparent when a talking picture is viewed in silent form. You will find characters gaily mouthing words to explain a situation which the picture alone does not explain. Through dialogue, a formula has been established, which, very strictly speaking, has diverted the film from its natural path. Attractive and smooth though the modern talking picture is, its method of treatment has tended to retard the progress of true film-making. To repeat, the film must always be dependent basically on moving images. Allied to this truth is the fact that most fictional films present a synthetic world. They depend upon the studio instead of on reality for their setting. When one realises that all other art forms fail to portray actuality so vividly, one will agree that the real possibilities of film-production seem hidden beneath a mountain of plaster settings, sprinkled with dialogue.

It might well be asked if this matters in view of the commercial success and entertainment value of the majority of feature films, and the answer is it matters, firstly, to the film itself, trying to express itself, and show what it can do; secondly, it matters to the creative artist anxious to make original films, and thirdly, it will ultimately matter to the industry which will reach a saturation point with its present product, and will then search in new directions for material.

### The three-walled room

Personally, I have nothing against either the artificial settings in fictional films, nor the people who devise them, professional and amateur, providing I am always permitted to register the fact that they are excluding films from the screen which can portray the world as it really is, and make it serve as a background for the drama or comedy being enacted—thus divorcing the screen from the stage and a complete dependence on the three-walled room. Commercial and climatic reasons are largely responsible for films conforming, more or less, to the same studio methods, but the group which breaks away from all that kind of thing is bound to win success, just as Britain would have done, had she not imitated the production methods of Hollywood. These imitations have been made on costly lines, with English equivalents of American technicians, in studios, the originals of which may be seen in Hollywood. We cannot afford to copy Hollywood—our market is smaller—we face periodical crises—why? Because we have lacked originality. We have not grasped the opportunities which film offers. We have not begun to make British pictures quite unlike the pictures of any other nation. We have not exploited the country and shown those characteristic things only to be found within our shores. We have made costly films in settings which might have been built in Paris, Rome, or New York. Thus our pictures have not revealed Britain as American films have revealed America, synthetic though most of her productions are.

How could this be rectified, and what has it all to do with the student or independent director? The remedy can be found by beginning again, and shattering the illusion that film-making is possible only for millionaires. The small director can utilise his freedom to create new formulae. Firstly, he must decide to star backgrounds which are authentic. They are cheaper than the studio can provide, for they are ready made, and need no lighting. They are limitless—industrial—pastoral—cities—villages—the high seas—the winding rivers—airports, seaports, transport by road — coal mines — mountains — downs — churches — cattle markets — radio stations. My advice to the potential director, or the experienced, though unsuccessful one, is to plan productions on a fictional-documentary basis, so that whether one lives in Huddersfield, Heligoland or Hades, the location can be truly portrayed, framing whatever story one wishes to tell. The background shares the acting honours with the characters, each strengthening the other.

Linked to this policy is the necessity for constructing one's film so that it depends, as far as possible, upon moving images—even explanatory titles being reduced to a minimum. There is no finer training, and no greater hope for the film. If voices must be introduced, use them indirectly—expressing thoughts, as imaginative commentaries—uttered by unseen people. Do not confuse human voices with natural sounds—the latter being universally understood, in the same way that music is an international language. Natural sounds and music are the allies of moving images, and together can create the most powerful of all methods of narration.

The conclusion, therefore, is to plan film production, whether on humble or expensive lines, so that material is introduced which could not be utilised in any other media. A studio is essential for a multitude of reasons, but it should never tempt the director to stay within its walls, and depend upon it for his settings. The atmosphere of film-making has become altogether too theatrical, too unreal, and the hosts of people who are attracted, like moths, to the glare of the arcs, are mostly personalities with the theatre in their blood. This fact tends to influence the film in the wrong direction, and although modern technique has enabled slick, amusing dialogue to be presented by attractive human voices, and extremely entertaining situations to be devised pictorially, the student must keep before him the mental plan for the universal film, and seek to express it.

My study of amateur production has led me to believe that a greater percentage of films based on the fundamental silent technique which is so desirable, are to be found outside the professional industry, because, ironically enough, lack of funds force the amateur to produce without sound. I am not suggesting that the old silent film is preferable to the talking picture, but that the talking picture must be transformed into a sound film, constructed upon silent film technique, and this the amateur can practise with advantage, both to himself and the industry.

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## *"The Shoe-Maker's Children go Ill Shod"*

It is a well-known fact that in tropical countries cinemas equipped with air conditioning command a full house throughout the day on account of the relief and relaxation afforded to patrons. It is amazing that we, in this country, should be so ill-equipped in this respect, when for years the engineers who have pioneered air conditioning have lived within a stone's throw of the site we now review.

Many people will be asking how this system of accurate atmospheric control has become possible—the answer is vacuum refrigeration. In order to provide the desired conditions in the Alhambra, the new cinema which Oscar Deutsch is building on the site of the old Alhambra, the air admitted will be washed, cooled and dehumidified, which process entails the use of water spray air washers calling for immense quantities of intensely cold water. In the process of vacuum refrigeration to be employed the spray water is circulated through a vacuum under which treatment, and in accordance with a basic physical law, partial evaporation occurs with a consequent drop in temperature.

# THE THREE-DIMENSIONAL WORLD

## *An Analysis of Stereoscopic Photography by* LIONEL H. HUITT, B.Sc

STEREOSCOPIC vision, an asset of fundamental importance in real life, is at last to be added to movement, colour, and sound in the cinema thereby advancing the art of the film another great leap towards the perfect illusion of reality—that ultimate goal of the technician.

Moving pictures are at present flat, restricted to a two-dimensional screen, and merely a single step ahead of a coloured print or poster. We are forced by virtue of this limitation to look *at* them. Admittedly they are endowed with lifelike movement but we still look *at* their moving form. With stereoscopic projection we shall look *into* the "picture" (though such a term is not now strictly applicable), and shall be conscious of distance and depth, relief and solidity, perceiving an apparently real three-dimensional world about us.

Actors and objects, inflated with a new sense of solidity and bulk, will appear in space, both in front and behind the screen. The russet foreground of a woodland view, stretching forward to within a few feet of our eyes, will seem genuinely miles away from the distant hills and the horizon. The whole magnificent panorama of nature, alive with movement and colour, can now be transported to the cinema for our delight, not merely as a picture or even in the likeness of a model, but complete with every semblance of reality, vibrant with that "something" which differentiates the false from the true.

LEFT EYE RIGHT EYE

**Fig. I. A Stereoscopic "twin" picture. Each frame in a stereoscopic cinematograph film consists of a pair of photographs as above. Note the relative movement of the background in the two views. The pictures are full of such variations most of which are, however, too minute to be noticed without precise measurement.**

### Depth and space

Shots taken from the roof of a skyscraper looking down to the creeping traffic far below, or from the topmast of a schooner swinging in a swelling sea, by virtue of the amazing illusion of depth and space, will give rise to a marked sensation of giddiness and vertigo. A retreating figure will not only decrease in size as is the case with the flat film, but will positively move away, receding from a position well in front of the screen to as far into the distance as the producer may care to arrange. Those beautiful lake views which were the highlights of *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, breath-taking in their exquisite colouring, will be transformed into tangible reality. The surface of the rippling water, reflecting the green pines and dappled with the shadows of overhanging foliage, will appear so amazingly natural that one will feel the urge to rush forward and plunge into its limpid coolness. Such scenes as these have, in the past, suffered rather severely from the limitations of "one-eyed" photography, for reflections *in* and shadows *on* a water surface have an imperative need of bi-ocular vision to bring out their true beauty—a beauty almost entirely dependent on their correct relative positions in space.

In addition to this remarkable heightening of reality, the innovation will also permit our eyes to function in a much more normal manner, allowing them to converge for a near object and diverge for one further away, as in real-life vision. The eyes will remain definitely fresher in consequence.

The term "picture," meaning as it does the portrayal of a natural scene on a flat surface, is quite inadequate to describe the new sensation and the need will arise for the coining of a brand new word in honour of the occasion. "Talking Pictures" will pass away, and "Talking Spacies" may reign in their stead.

The stereoscopic idea is, of course, by no means in its infancy; in fact, it is nearly as old as photography itself. Most people must be familiar with the ordinary stereoscope and have peeped through twin eye-pieces of the apparatus at the double pictures behind. Perhaps some may have wondered why the effect has not yet been utilised for film projection, considering the amazingly lifelike appearance of such stereoscopic views. The problem of adapting the idea to the cinema is not, however, as easy as it might seem, and the solution lay in finding some means of allowing each of our two eyes to see a separate and distinct picture. The necessity of this will be realised if an object is held at arm's length in front of the face. When looked at with the right eye only, the object and the background are in certain relative positions, but when viewed with the left eye, the positions change—the background seeming to move quite a distance to the left. Each eye is always receiving its own distinctive picture; for instance, objects which appear in a line for the right eye are not so when viewed with the left. Although the variations in the two eye views are frequently quite small, they are absolutely essential for stereoscopic vision, as our brains judge distance and depth by their aid.

To re-create the effect by photographic means, it is necessary to take two pictures, one for the left eye and one for the right, and this is achieved by a double camera having two lenses about eye-distance apart. The ordinary stereoscope is merely a device for allowing the left eye to see only the photograph taken with the left lens of the camera, and the right eye only that taken with the right. The two eyes then act normally and combine the two photographs in the mind to re-create stereoscopic vision.

There is a very great difference, however, between producing the effect with a hand-held apparatus and re-creating the same result for an audience of a thousand, but the fundamental requirements are the same. Each eye of the individual must see its proper and appropriate picture.

The simplest way of attaining this result is by means of what is technically known as the "Anaglyphic" method, every person in the audience being equipped with a pair of spectacles having one red and one green eye-piece. The two pictures of the stereoscopic "pair" are projected and superimposed on the screen, one being coloured green and the other red. The coloured spectacles allow the correct picture for the right eye to be seen only by the right eye, and *vice versa*. This Anaglyphic method has already been demonstrated on several occasions to the public, the most recent exposition being termed "Audioscopic" projection, as it combined sound with the stereoscopic effect. Unfortunately, though so simple in its essentials, the method is patently unsuitable for colour films.

### Polarised light

A second line of approach utilises the properties of polarised light—the theory of which is rather complicated and too involved for easy explanation in a short article. Again, the audience is required to wear spectacles, but each eye piece is covered with what is apparently the same type of slightly tinted glass. Two pictures are thrown on to the screen and superimposed, the "left-eye" picture being projected by the aid of light polarised in an up-and-down direction, while the "right-eye" picture is produced by means of light polarised in a horizontal plane. Although the two glasses composing the spectacles may *look* identical they are actually very different, for the left eyeglass will only permit up-and-down light to pass through, and the right glass only light polarised in a horizontal direction. Through the medium of these selective glasses, each eye sees only that picture intended for it, and the combination of the right and left eye

# *The Three-dimensional World (cont.)*

images, as in the ordinary stereoscope, gives rise to the stereoscopic effect. Colour films can be projected by this means and gain somewhat in their tone values, as the polarising spectacles tend to soften the rather strident white light. Two disadvantages are unfortunately inherent in the scheme. Polarised light de-polarises itself to a slight extent on reflection from the cinema screen and this causes the glasses to lose some of their selective quality. The main trouble, however, is that the spectacles must be kept truly horizontal if they are to work efficiently. Bending the head over to one side beyond a certain critical angle can seriously interfere with their correct working. This limitation of movement would certainly prove irksome to many of the younger generation who frequent the cinemas in pairs!

## Electro-Mechanical Selection

The third method tackles the problem in a somewhat similar manner, but does the selection by electro-mechanical means. The spectacles utilised have two glass-covered apertures, each about $\frac{3}{4}$ in. long by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide, which are alternately opened and closed to the passage of light by means of high speed vibrating shutters. The two pictures thrown on the screen are alternated very rapidly, the left-eye picture being shown for about a fiftieth of a second, and then withdrawn to make room for the right-eye picture which occupies the screen for the next fiftieth of a second. When the left-eye picture is in the place of honour, the left-eye aperture of the spectacles is open and the right-eye closed, and when the right-eye picture is shown, the reverse occurs. The speed of alternation is so high that the eyes are completely unaware of any flicker and each receives a seemingly continuous image of its appropriate view.

This method of electro-mechanical selection has occupied the minds of inventors for many years, and numerous patents have been taken out for its accomplishment. Only recently, however, has the idea been developed into a commercial possibility, with spectacles which can be made as light and comfortable as ordinary horn-rimmed reading glasses. As the process depends on absolute synchronisation between the projectors and the spectacles, each pair of the latter is fitted with a thin electric flex terminating in a small plug which fits into an unobtrusive socket in the arm of the cinema seat. The actual operating power required to work the spectacles is less than a third of that necessary to light a small electric hand torch.

Both the Anaglyphic and the polarised light methods attain their selective effect by biasing the eyes in a rather unnatural manner. Prolonged use of red and green spectacles will obviously numb the retinas of our eyes to other colour sensations, and on emerging from the darkened cinema into the bright sunlight outside (even at present, a rather trying experience), the eyes will require quite a time to get back to their normal state, and in the interim the strain may give rise to a headache. It is safe to predict that the polarising glasses will not cause such a noticeable after-effect, but so far very few data are available on the reaction of the retina to a long spell of polarised light, and the oculist will have to be carefully consulted before the process is adopted for general public use.

The electro-mechanical method (known technically as the "Stroboscopic") does not suffer from this drawback—the ordinary film having already demonstrated that high-speed "flicker," if properly controlled, is not only unperceived by the human eye owing to its persistence of vision, but produces no "hang-over" on the retina.

Many attempts have been made to give the stereoscopic effect without glasses, but although this is possible for a single observer or a small group, it is a commercial impossibility when applied to a normal cinema audience of five hundred souls and upwards. One ingenious inventor proposed using a huge revolving drum of about eighty feet in diameter, something like the circular railings round a bandstand. He carefully seated his audience around part of the periphery, looking through the palings towards the picture displayed near the centre, and then started the contraption revolving. The palings were so arranged that when one was blocking the vision of the left eye, the right optic was peering

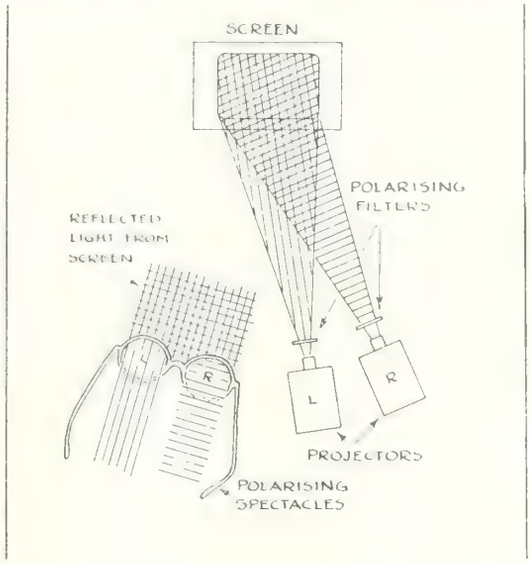


Fig. 2. **Stereo-projection using polarised light. The picture for the left eye is projected by means of light polarised in a vertical direction and that for the right eye by means of horizontally polarised light. The viewing spectacles have polarising-glass eye-pieces which select the correct picture for each eye, as indicated in the diagram.**

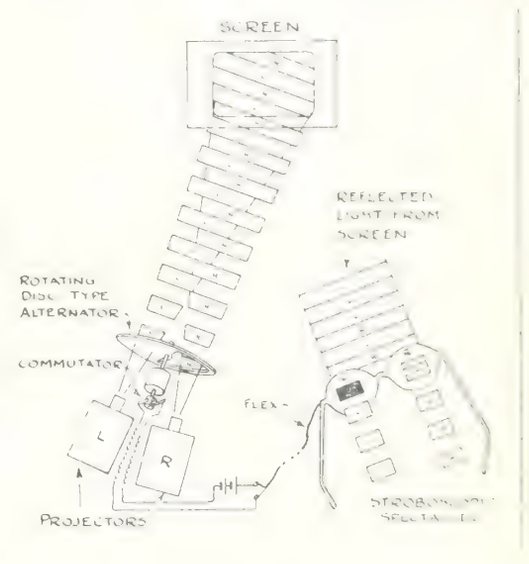


Fig. 3. **Stereo-projection by the Stroboscopic (electro-mechanical) process. The "twin" pictures are alternately shown on the screen, the speed of alternation being above 50 per second. The eye apertures of the spectacles are alternately opened and closed in synchronism. In the diagram the right eye aperture is shown open—allowing that eye *only* to see the right eye picture which is being projected. Both the "left-eye" projector and the left eye aperture of the spectacles are momentarily shut down.**

through a gap. No doubt (like the gadgets of Heath Robinson) the idea is thoroughly workable, but for some obscure reason, it does not seem to have impressed the film industry as a paying proposition.

And what will this innovation mean to the cinema business in general? Certainly a complete revision of the technique in the studio. Fake backgrounds will not be possible as at present, and those castle battlements, which in reality were drawn to a minute scale on transparent celluloid and held in front of the camera, will not work under the new regime. New ideas, however, will soon take the place of the old and the art of film faking will continue, but in a more complicated form.

Colour photography will receive a new impetus, for the novel illusion of depth produced by stereoscopic vision will demand the co-operation of colour to round-off and complete its almost perfect semblance of reality.

The mention of colour brings to mind those wonderful "Silly Symphonies," and the host of imaginary but famous characters in the cartoon sphere. What of Donald the Duck, Betty Boop and Pop-Eye? They, poor souls, are flat even before they are photographed. Will they in consequence be relegated to that limbo already tenanted by so many forgotten stars unable to make the grade when "talkies" arrived? Heaven forbid, for their passing would be a major catastrophe. Providentially for Walt Disney and his confrères, such cartoon characters can be assimilated into the new cinema with very little trouble and no extra work on the part of the artists themselves. The effect, however, will be radically different from that created by the normal type of stereoscopic film. The individual figures of B. Boop and D. Duck will appear as cut-out coloured cardboard pieces moving on a stage set with a drop curtain background and typical flat stage scenery. The extra third dimension will be represented only by the distance apart of the various figures in the cartoon (measured along our line of sight), and will not create an appearance of bulk or solidity in the characters themselves. They will still remain flat, bless them, but will have an extra third dimension in which to caper. It is quite conceivable, however, that future cinema audiences will welcome a spell of the existing flat type of coloured cartoon as a change from the stereoscopic talkie, just as at present a three-dimensional "real life" turn on the cinema stage constitutes an appreciated break in a programme of two-dimensional films. There are no real grounds, therefore, to fear that the "two-eyed" innovation will debar us from further acquaintance with the unique genius of the cartoon creators.

The studio camera will alter its appearance and blossom out with two lenses. The distance between the lenses will be variable and many new effects will be produced by manipulating

# *The Three-dimensional World (cont.)*

them in different ways. For normal work, the distance between the camera's eyes will be about three inches, as this approximates to human sight, but the effect of relief can be greatly accentuated by increasing this dimension and correspondingly reduced by bringing the lenses nearer together.

Great care will have to be exercised in the early use of the new double-lensed cameras to avoid causing the cinema public unnecessary eye strain. A "close-up," if nearer than ten feet, will tend to make the observer's eyes work in an abnormal manner. This is due to the fact that our eyes automatically focus themselves to a degree directly related to the amount of their convergence. For example, when viewing a distant object, the eyes look along practically parallel lines of sight, and when so positioned, automatically focus to give a sharp definition of things far off. Should we look at something only a foot away, our eyes swing inwards and the lines of sight converge. Automatically with this convergence, the eyes focus to a depth of a foot. Now the stereoscopic screen can produce an image which, from the convergence criterion, is only a foot away, but—and here comes the snag—the actual images we are *really* looking at are on the screen, possibly as much as a hundred feet from the eyes, and will therefore be out of focus.

## "Nearness" of images

This is possibly a trifle difficult to follow, but it means, in simple language, that although we shall be able to see things apparently in space and not merely confined to the surface of the screen, there will be a definite limit to their apparent nearness to us. The glamorous star will have to keep her distance, so to speak, always eight or ten feet away. "Close-ups" will be rather unique when first encountered; we shall visualise the heroine's emoting features, very much enlarged, but still ten feet away, and all those throbbing embraces will take place—ten feet away. How tantalising—but how safe! No gangsters will be able to bump us off; they may threaten most ferociously, but we shall merely grin, knowing that they are incapable of coming nearer to carry out their villainy. Even their bullets will disintegrate when this nebulous barrier is reached!

Although the coming of stereoscopic vision will give much greater freedom to our eyes, we shall still have to delegate certain of our ocular powers to the man behind the camera, resting content in the knowledge that he is most unlikely to abuse our trust. Focusing, for instance, will be entirely in his hands and we shall expect him, as a matter of decency, to focus his lenses on the "point of major interest" in the scene, be it a crouching panther, or a custard pie. There is, however, another and quite novel knack that he must acquire if he is to serve us faithfully, and that is to place his camera so that nothing of interest lies *just* outside our line of sight, hidden by a nearer object or just around a corner. In order to understand the importance of this, imagine yourself for a moment standing near a lamp-post waiting for a bus. On hearing something approach in the distance you turn, but find that the lamp-post is just obstructing your view. Immediately, and unconsciously, you move your head slightly to one side to "peer" round the offending post and so get a glimpse of the bus. This simple trick of "peering" in order to gain a better view, utilising what is known to science as the "parallax" effect, has become such an automatic reaction in our everyday life that it will be extremely difficult to suppress when in the cinema—the only place, unfortunately, where it will fail to produce the desired result.

## The "parallax" effect

It is now possible, with the aid of stereo-projection, to recreate the selfsame lamp-post and the adjacent roadway in the cinema, and in a manner so realistic that it will tempt us, as in real life, to peep round the post to improve our view; but directly we move our heads, we shall get a shock, for the lamp-post instead of staying still, *will follow in the same direction*, and however hard we try, no matter where we go, it will persistently and annoyingly continue to obstruct our line of sight. This queer sensation, due entirely to the absence of the "parallax" effect, is really most weird when first experienced and, moreover, can be most exasperating if the object causing the desire to "peer" remains partially obscured for any length of time. Luckily for our peace of mind, such disturbing occurrences will be rare, for our attention, subtly persuaded by the devices of the "continuity" man, will be concentrated almost exclusively on that clearly-focussed well-positioned "point of major interest" to which reference has been made above.

During the early transitional period, before new projectors have been constructed and installed, two separate films will be supplied, one for the right eye and one for the left. Most cinemas are already fitted with two machines and these can be easily converted by simple synchronising apparatus to run the two films through at exactly the same speed. This temporary expedient will also allow the studios to cater for both "stereoscopic" and "flat" projectors with very little extra trouble. Later on, the "twin" pictures will be incorporated, side by side, on a single strip of film and special apparatus will be devised for the double projection. A valuable patent for this idea has quite recently been taken out by Monsieur Louis Lumière, that Grand Old Man of the photographic world, who has already done so much for the realisation of the stereoscopic ideal.

## The fading screen-edge

With two-dimensional films it is the custom to confine the pictures within a sharply defined black border. This may prove rather irksome with the new effect and will probably be superseded by a more appropriate type of surround which fades away gradually from the edge of the picture. Something indefinite is required which will not appear to be fixed at any particular position in the auditorium. The area occupied by the projected picture on the screen will, as time goes on, increase in size, throwing out this indefinite but limiting border as far from our line of sight as possible.

The requisite spectacles to be used by the patrons will at first be issued from the box-office, the management asking for a small deposit to ensure their safe return. Each pair will be freshly sterilised and the bridges and side-pieces (which fit over the ears) will probably be encased in hygienic rice-paper, so that they may be readily acceptable to the most fastidious. Inveterate cinema-goers will, no doubt, invest in their own private spectacles and, where necessary, have them made up to the same prescription as their ordinary glasses.

To recreate the perfect illusion in the cinema, *all* the human senses should be fully catered for. Sight and hearing are, however, the most important. With stereoscopic vision added to movement, colour and sound, ninety-five per cent of the illusion is achieved, and considering the great advance towards reality attained by the new "two-eyed" technique, we shall be able to await, without undue impatience, the final addition of touch, taste, and smell.

# Cine Societies and Royal Photographic

Early in 1936 the Committee of the Kine Section of the Royal Photographic Society appointed a Sub-Committee, consisting of Mr. T. S. Lutas, Mr. H. Walden, A.R.P.S., and Mr. G. C. Weston, F.R.P.S., to consider the relationship of the Kine Section with amateur cine societies. The scheme which was worked out by that Sub-Committee has now been put into operation.

In effect, it provides machinery for the mutual assistance of those cine societies whose work aims at contributing to the advancement of cinematography. The first work which is being undertaken is the preparation of panels, both of competition judges and lecturers, who are prepared to assist Federated Societies. Four meetings annually will also be held at the Headquarters of the R.P.S., at 35 Russell Square, London, W.C.1, at which members of societies will be able to meet those from other societies and learn what they are doing. Federated Societies receive the monthly journal of the R.P.S. for circulation amongst their membership and, when a member of a Society personally joins the R.P.S., certain benefits accrue to the member and to his Society.

It has been found possible to fit the new organisation into the existing scheme of federation of "still" photographic societies which already operates through the "Photographic Alliance," and the Cine Federation becomes a member of the Alliance. In view of the association with the Kine Section of the R.P.S., two representatives of the latter sit on the Federation Committee.

Until such time as circumstances require, the Federation will not be regionally divided. The constitution provides, however, for the provincial members, in the matter of sending deputies to meetings and recording votes in writing. Also, for the time being, each constituent society is entitled to a representative on the Committee.

The annual subscription is £1. 1*s*., or, in the case of a Cine Section of a Photographic Society already affiliated to the R.P.S., 10*s*. 6*d*.

It is hoped that the membership will at first approach twenty. The following have already formally entered into membership: Beckenham C.S., Birmingham P.S. (Cine Section), Finchley A.C.S., Grimsby P.S. (Cine Section), Ilford A.C.S., Kodak Works P.S., Leatherhead Cine Circle, Manchester F.S., Montagu Pictures (Newcastle-on-Tyne), South London C.S., West Essex F.S., Whitehall C.S., Wimbledon C.C. Other societies are putting the matter before their membership.

The Chairman of the Federation is Mr. H. Walden, A.R.P.S., the Hon. Secretary: Mr. F. P. Barnitt, Filmers, Forest Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, and the Hon. Treasurer: Mr. W. Sugden.

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VOL. 2 NO. 4 PRICE: ONE SHILLING JULY 1937

by
DAVID
CLEGHORN
THOMSON
*Ex-Director, Scottish Regional*

# Reith, the Man

*Though one of the most discussed national figures to-day, Sir John Reith, Director-General of the B.B.C., is still a figure of mystery. It is of public importance that more should be known of the man who guides the destiny of so powerful a medium as British Radio. Here for the first time, is published an intimate character sketch by one of his own high officials.*

It is quite impossible to understand the policy of Portland Place or the essential quality of our radio service, in its good and bad aspects alike, without attempting to study the personality of the man who has controlled its destinies from its inception and moulded its growth to his tastes. And surely, with the possible exception of Mr. Montagu Norman of the Bank of England, there has been no character in public life since the War around whom so much controversy and mystery have centred. There are some who conceive of Sir J. C. W. Reith as a Mussolinic dictator, ever hungry for power, who "sets all hearts in the state to what tune pleased his ear." Others imagine him a covenanting idealist, a Praise-God Barebones dwelling on chill Olympic heights of motive, resolved to uplift the groundlings, "thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated to closeness and the bettering of my mind." A section of the public thinks of the Director-General as a veritable ogre of regimentation, fiercely paranoiac, secretly tapping telephones, listening at keyholes, breaking spirits and careers, banishing all save "yes men" from the immediate entourage of his trembling court. Yet Church dignitaries look upon him as a defender of the faith; the most eminent civil servant I know considers him the greatest public servant Britain has seen since the War. He is clearly the dominating force in a ship which is not yet a happy ship. What is the truth about this mysterious Scot?

One of the things which best mirrors the personality of Reith is the building in which the Corporation works. Peter Fleming described it as a cross between a liner and a lunatic asylum. From the sombre Roman sacrificial altar-front with its Latin inscription in the entrance hall, to the Director-General's private office, it all bears the stamp of a man with a complex make-up, but definite views and prejudices. Broadcasting House has an atmosphere different from that of a great newspaper office; different from the Royal Academy or the Imperial Institute. It is something between a modern University and a modernized Sing-Sing. There are bewildering and labyrinthine corridors, each one exactly like the other. When the uncouth swain first treads these passages, he may well feel the "shades of the prison-house" beginning to close around him. There is the Board Room, with its quasi-Egyptian mouldings, its romantic picture of Prospero and Ariel, and its high-backed red-leather chairs, so like the upholstery of the Upper Chamber—only newer. There is the array of modern *décor* and design, chromium steel and imitation leather-bound books flanking the panelled walls. This is the back-ground evolved by the executives against which the workers do their daily work.

The Director-General's own room is even more revealing. It is redolent of the atmosphere of a panelled, centrally-heated Fifth-Avenue Presbyterian manse study. A touch of stained glass, a portrait of the Chief's famous father, who was a Moderator of the United Free Church of Scotland, and, let into the wall, a rather sentimental picture of one of those scenes from which old Scotia's grandeur keeps on springing. But it would be unfair to stop here. On the great desk at which Reith works there stands (or stood at one time) a small woolly lamb, mutely striving to remind him that he is a human being

quite capable of unbending, and showing unexpected friskiness and simplicity on occasion. If Sir Stephen Tallents, who has rendered great service in the "projection of Empire," could only project this lamb throughout the staff, and even among the wider circle of listeners, some of the problems of the "unhappy ship" might not even arise for solution.

Let it not be supposed that this giant of the air has no human qualities lurking behind his forbidding, towering frame. During my own brief experience of work with him I saw him do one or two exceedingly kind and generous things. I have heard of great unbends on holiday treks, and have known of an exchange or two of good-humoured banter from time to time. The fact remains that Reith, as most of his staff see him in the system of office routine and secret dossiers, of sudden arrivals and hushed-up departures, is not a genial figure, not even a human figure, certainly not a lovable figure.

It must not be overlooked that in the early years of the service Reith did a great work. He had an inspired and inspiring obstinacy, common to Scots of his type, which kept the medium inviolate and made its controllers aim high, however little they comprehended the subtler implications of the force they were moulding and wielding. He undertook a gigantic task and displayed considerable powers of endurance, of negotiation, and even of vision. As Major Attlee said in the House: "He put up a splendid resistance to vested interests of all kinds. . . . He has set high standards." But, like many parents, he was unable to realize when patriarchal control ceased to be desirable after the maturity of his offspring. Like the hen and the duckling in the Hans Andersen fable, he was bewildered when the nestling he had fostered took to a new element. He was completely unable to understand or to control artistically temperamental people, or to tolerate constructive critics trying to co-operate in his task from within. And the B.B.C. had to carry "the heaviest crew of isolated intellectuals of any vessel in British waters."

## "This Dominating Scot"

In her admirable little survey of Broadcasting in the Home University Library, Hilda Matheson thus sums up the types which go to make up the broadcasting staff:—

> "They are, on the whole, young rather than old, and include a high proportion of those who served in the War, but who, often on account of some awkward versatility, or some form of fastidiousness, idealism or general restlessness, never settled down to any humdrum profession after the war was over."

These are the people who fail to be shepherded, inspired, cribbed, cabined, and confined by this dominating Scot, who was himself an able and successful soldier. A man essentially shy, uneasy in society, yet avid of praise from its leaders, often bullying in negotiation, but charming in trouble, deprived of the benefits of a University education and perhaps unduly impressed by its hallmark; a man relatively untrained in the techniques of music or education, and yet not loth to generalize upon them; a man of iron nerve and splendid constitution, impatient of the ills that flesh is heir to. It is the direct result of his outlook that no stimulating body of critical opinion has ever sprung up in the Press, just as it is equally due to his presence that the majority of those who have really contributed constructively to the development of broadcasting from within have left the service after a series of troubled years punctuated by nervous breakdowns, rows, and compromises with authority.

From the *New Statesman* I must quote from a sketch of Reith, undoubtedly unkind, that explains much that is good and bad in the machine.

> "They say he is austere, a fanatical Puritan, in awe of Hell, yet suspecting Heaven; they say that his aloofness shows strength and character, but also that it is the defence of a timid Philistine; to some he seems a shrewd fighter; to others a weak, blustering neurotic. Some say, at least he is honest, others regard him as an uncompromising opportunist. But they really know nothing at all about him.
>
> "All they know for certain is that he is forty-four, a son of the Scottish Church, educated at Holt, an engineer by long apprenticeship, scarred in the War, and at thirty-three accounted Ambition's darling by his deliberate decision to make broadcasting a profession. An administrator and a technician, he was among the first to realise the potentialities of wireless: its direction is now in his hands by virtue of his own foresight and tenacity, not because anyone thought him a suitable arbiter of public taste.
>
> "We may, of course, learn something from his public appearances. From Low you see him, a great black tower of a man, one eye burning fiercely, one a little scarred, mouth moulded in a cynical No. His smile is so rare and so lovely that the humanity it discovers seems a mirage. As for his words, inconsistent philosophy and unsound sociology jostle in his throat. Did he once make a scornful jest of democracy and brand the average Briton an enfeebled moron? In the next sentence he expresses complete satisfaction at the spectacle of England's glorious future in charge of these poor sons.
>
> "There is not much to learn that way. Impossible to pilfer opinions from his intimates. He has no intimates and few friends. Futile to pump his staff. They do not know him, nor he them.
>
> "But by their works ye shall know them. Look, then, at the British Broadcasting Corporation. Two factors have gone to its making: experiment and discipline. Experiment there has been in plenty, in administration, in personnel, in programme-building. The Director-General must often have had the profitable experience of watching others burn their fingers. His own he does not burn. He is a master of the methods of indirect rule. Discipline there is for all who work for the Corporation: discipline in long hours, in anonymity, in unrecognised and unrewarded effort. For the Director-General, it is said, does not believe in praise; blame is his chosen incentive.*
>
> "Consider some of his experiments—Broadcasting House, for instance. Himself no lover of the arts, as the mixed oak and mahogany of his own room show, he yet consented to the erection of a modern building (not too modern), to carvings (Gill, not Epstein), to decorations studiously functional. Or look at his staff. Gifted amateurs, many of them, chosen autocratically. First-class ability is not encouraged and is apt to leave the Corporation. . . . The Director-General is not himself an educated man, but he believes in the medicinal effect of education, and so he sponsors an educational programme arranged by those who have received the benison of Oxford or Cambridge. A cultural dictatorship, some say. But, however tolerant or liberal the Talks are, and however generously the Director-General dispenses progressive thought in art, science, and philosophy, with his left hand, with his right he is tied to the *status quo*. . . . No man of iron, but supreme in the art of effective compromise."

**This sketch of Sir John Reith will be published in the book "Radio is Changing Us," by David Cleghorn Thomson. (Watts, July 15th).**

## "The Frustrated Idealist"

To my mind there is a strange conflict within Reith's personality—various ideas and ideals are forever warring for mastery within him, and this produces a constant inconsistency. At one moment he is the frustrated idealist hating to be misunderstood. He is like Grosvenor, in Gilbert's "Patience":

> "*Grosvenor:* I assure you, if you could only suggest some means whereby, consistently with my duty to society, I could escape these inconvenient attentions, you would earn my everlasting gratitude. . . . I can't help that. I am a man with a mission. And that mission must be fulfilled."

The next moment he is secure in the sense of an ingenious compromise which he imagines will please everybody and alienate no one. He has ceased to be the missionary and is playing the Machiavelli: he is like Bunthorne in Gilbert's "Patience":

> "*Bunthorne:* All that is changed. I have reformed. I have modelled myself upon Mr. Grosvenor. Henceforth, I am mildly cheerful. My conversation will blend amusement with instruction; but my æstheticism will be of the most pastoral kind."

While I was working under Reith, I used from time to time to be reminded strongly of certain phrases in the paraphrases with which all sons of the manse are familiar, more particularly the one about the Rock of Ages standing supreme in wisdom as in power:—

> "Though him thou canst not see nor trace
> The working of his hands."

And again:—

> "According as his labours rise
> So his rewards increase—"

But no one could ever apply in this case the concluding couplet:

> "His ways are ways of pleasantness
> And all his paths are peace."

* This is not in my experience true at all.

# EDITORIAL

## Either — or

"I LEFT ENGLAND with depression over the film industry," said Mr. Korda, recently interviewed on the new £1,200,000 tie-up with United Artists, "and found Hollywood on the top of a wave. Never has there been such aggressive spending, salaries have never been bigger; a million dollars is a moderate price for a film and they are getting their money back. In 1930-31 six of the major film companies in Hollywood were in the hands of receivers. Now only one is, and we get criticised because we spend £150,000 on a film. We have got to stand on our feet, and now it is certain that our productions will be sold in all parts of the world. Every picture will have American distribution."

With the immediate panic of crisis over, the British film industry takes thought for the morrow. From the sorrowful analysis of past losses two schools of thought emerge, each putting forward a policy for the future. We quote Mr. Korda's announcement because it crystallises one of them. This school seeks to create an export industry relying for success on costly production and international capital. It maintains that the secret of American success is an assured international market and that the acquisition of such a market for Britain depends, at least in part, on the creation of higher quality and appeal by lavish production expenditure. Perchance its belief may be justified, though it is evidently necessary to repeat the somewhat elementary warning that "aggressive spending" without a directive sense of producership makes neither for æsthetic value nor economic sanity. Mr. Korda quotes the American film crisis of 1930; the reasons for that crisis (so far as they can be disentangled from the wider chaos of the time) have been generally attributed to the drop in production quality following the ousting of the showmen by the financiers. And the British cinema is still short of that first-rate showmanship on which large sums can be risked.

There is another point that this school of thought might take from the implications of American movie history. A million dollars may, as Mr. Korda says, at the present time be a moderate price for a Hollywood film: but the growth of efficiency in American production methods has made it reasonably certain that the major proportion of the cost will appear on the screen. Even the most cautious critics of the British production system are agreed that its present plight was largely brought about by failures of organisation. In the more violent camps extravagance, waste and the expense of indecision have been added to the charge-sheet. But even if we accept only the most moderate evidence on this score we must look with grave doubt on the large-scale production figures already announced for next year until we have an assurance that the British studios have learnt how to allocate money. So far this assurance has not been given. Failure to secure foreign markets has, with due pomp, been pronounced the cause of the crisis. Perhaps that is only one of the causes. Others may lie nearer home.

The first school of thought thus puts forward a policy essentially similar to that which has led to the present débâcle. It is a policy calling for new and heavy financial commitments and fraught with the dangers of repeated miscalculation.

The second policy seeks equally to create an international market, but at the same time to build up an industry working within the economic limits of the independent British market should the wider fields of sale not materialise. It maintains that the cure for the present trouble lies in the elimination of luxury, the avoidance of unnecessary spectacle and a heavy cut in the fantastic salaries of stars and executives. It holds that with this better sense of proportion and organisation simple and effective films could be made for as little as twelve thousand pounds, and that, given the elements of imagination and character, there is nothing to prevent the production of first-class ambitious films for fifty to sixty thousand pounds. This proposal is founded on the belief that the makings of a successful British cinema are now established and that with the coming of a new and effective personnel of production control, an industry carrying the guarantee of native vitality is within easy reach. Courage and leadership in re-organisation and experiment are the necessary conditions of its creation.

## The Government proposes . . . .

THE BOARD OF TRADE'S proposals for new protective legislation for the film industry have been indicated, though they are not regarded by the Board as final and definite. Further criticism and guidance are invited.

The proposals impose a 20 per cent Quota of British films on renters and provide for an increase to 30 per cent. Separate quota is suggested for short films. Ten per cent of the short films handled by renters and 5 per cent of the short films shown by exhibitors must be British. Long films if they are to rank for quota must cost a minimum of £15,000, and films costing £45,000 and over are permitted to rank double quota.

No provision is made for the setting up of a Film Commission. This suggestion of the Moyne Committee that an independent body with Government appointed personnel should guide the affairs of the industry, disappears.

The Board of Trade has had the hard task of reconciling the various and opposing interests of renter, exhibitor and producer and everyone who knows the fierce and pandemoniac politics of the film trade must respect the Board's powers of endurance. But even now it may not be too late for the small voice of the independent to be heard.

The proposals mean fewer films. May this not put a bludgeon in the hand of the American renter and the circuit exhibitor to be used against the independent exhibitor? The cost limit at £15,000 is higher than one may safely get back in an independent market. May this not put a bludgeon in the hand of the big operators, to be used against the independent producer?

Does a 10 per cent—5 per cent quota of British shorts represent anything but lip-service to this valuable and essentially independent section of the industry? The shorts producer faces a dumped market in which most of the films are given as throw-aways with the feature film. At present he can justify the expenditure of only £500 on a two reel film. Will a quota of one in twenty allow him to escape from these poverty stricken conditions of production? Will it permit him to make more films? We doubt it.

Of the disappearance of the Commission from the proposals, we need only say this. The hope of creating a reasonable public spirited policy within the film industry has disappeared with it.

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# No Real Crisis

*"I meet an Englishman"*

## *The Diary of a Clapper Boy*

*by J. R.*

Feb. 5th. After three months' fruitless search for job, got idea of going into films. Morning paper mentioned rising British Film Industry and that we would soon capture the American market. So, may be, there's a place for me too. And think of all the stars one could see. I'm going to try, anyway.

Feb. 9th. Studio manager said he was sorry, but there was no vacancy. Anyhow that's what I thought he said. Man had very peculiar accent, perhaps he's a foreigner.

Feb. 21st. Been in seven more studios. No luck. Same accents.

March 10th. Hurrah! I got a job!! I am going to be a clapper boy. I don't quite know what I shall have to do, but they said it wasn't sitting in cinemas and clap. Why worry?

March 11th. We are supposed to start shooting to-morrow. To-day I went round the camera room.

March 12th. Waiting all day. No shooting.

March 13th. Same as yesterday. They say the script isn't ready.

March 14th. Still waiting. To-day I saw a man in white flannels playing marbles in the corridor. Thought he was an extra who had been kept waiting too long. But was told he's our producer. Can't quite imagine what he can produce that way.

March 15th. I'm used to waiting now. Will there ever be shooting? They say now, they don't like the script. But it didn't matter, once the treatment was ready, they would all love it. The film is going to be called: "One-way Street to Paradise." Sounds romantic, doesn't it?

### We're off

March 17th. We're off! We are shooting!! We are doing artistes' tests!!

March 18th. Still doing tests.

March 19th. Tests again.

March 20th. We are waiting again. The treatment is ready but they don't like it either. They are not worrying however, the "rushes," they say, will show them all!

Marsh 21st. To-day we were going to shoot the first scene. But the director didn't like the flowers outside his private office. They distract him instead of inspiring him. He insisted on personally supervising the flowers being changed. There aren't many flowers this time of the year, so there was no shooting to-day.

March 22nd. We did shoot. Not only that, but we're going to shoot to-morrow as well although it is Sunday. Most of the unit are fed-up after having mucked about all week and now they have to work on Sunday. But the Production Manager came on the set at lunch time and said that we have to compete with America and, therefore, would have to make an extra effort and work on Sunday. Sounds a bit mad after waiting all that time, but may be, he's right. If we want to capture the American market we will probably have to work extra hard. So I'm going to do my share of Sunday clapping.

### No Oranges on Sunday

March 23rd. We were shooting again. Close-ups of our leading lady. The director shouted at her because she didn't turn up until lunch time. But she said she couldn't get any oranges on a Sunday morning and she could only work after orange juice.

March 24th. Monday. No shooting to-day. They saw the rushes and they don't like the look of the leading lady.

March 25th. We're doing tests again.

March 26th. Waiting all day.

March 27th. We are shooting again. The new leading lady is very young and pretty and they say she's going to be a hit.

March 28th. They thought the rushes were marvellous. She is going to be a "hit."

March 29th. No shooting to-day. The leading lady didn't like the dialogue. They want her to say: "How could you ever think such a thing, Jim?" She says it sounds silly. At lunch time the script-writer came down but he couldn't understand what it was all about because he can't speak English very well. They are having a conference.

March 30th. Sunday. No shooting. I feel as I have been in the films for ages. There is something about the whole thing. But not much! It's like a disease. You are fed-up and still you can't get rid of it. I met another Englishman yesterday. He is doing the sound. He says he doesn't really know how he got in there, but perhaps it was because the Americans thought he was German.

March 31st. We're off again! They changed the dialogue from: "How could you ever think such a thing, Jim?" into: "Jim, how could you ever think such a thing?"

April 7th. We have been shooting for a week. To-morrow they are going to see the first "rough cut."

April 8th. They didn't like the rough cut. "It stinks," they said. The cutter said it's the fault of the script. The script-writer didn't say anything because he couldn't understand the cutter. So they're going to alter the script.

April 9th. No shooting. They are altering the script.

April 11th. We are shooting again. They changed the script. Our leading lady's part is very small now, but they say she's going to be a "hit" all the same.

April 12th. She's a "hit" all right. She hit the assistant director in the face after reading the new script and walked out. Now they've got to look for another leading lady, I suppose.

April 14th. We are doing tests again.

April 15th. We started retaking all the scenes with our new leading lady. They all like her much better.

April 16th. We saw the rushes with the new leading lady. She is marvellous.

April 17th. There was a big row to-day. The old leading lady came back and insisted on getting her part back. They are having a conference.

April 18th. Something funny must have happened. We are having a third leading lady who nobody has seen before. The director calls her "Darling" and nobody knows what has happened to the other two.

April 28th. We have been shooting for a week without interruption. Everything seems to run very smoothly.

April 29th. It ran too smoothly. No shooting to-day. They're having contract trouble. The leading man's contract is up and he's back on his old one. The leading lady has got Wednesday off and the rest of the time when the leading lady is free, he is on the wireless, except on Saturday when she is doing television. So they somehow don't seem to get together. It seems sad. They have just fallen in love in the last scene we shot.

April 30th. No shooting.

May 1st. We are going on location to-morrow until the contract trouble is over.

May 2nd. We are on location. It is raining. No shooting.

May 3rd. It is still raining. I learnt poker to-day. We are going back to the studio to-morrow to line up for shooting inside.

May 4th. Sunday. We are shooting inside. The sun is shining. The studio manager made another speech and we are shooting some back projection. We are going back on location to-morrow.

May 12th. We were on location for a week. We got a few shots in between showers. To-day we are back in the studio. The contract trouble seems to be over.

May 13th. We started shooting again. After the first shot a dispute developed between the director and the leading lady, about a scene. She said that in her part she was an innocent girl and therefore couldn't smile when she read in the paper that the leading man had got a divorce. The director gave her a nasty look and said she shouldn't "kid herself." He wants her to smile at all costs. At lunch time the producer came on the set and said she should laugh hysterically and not smile at all. They are having a conference.

May 14th. Thank Goodness, the 13th is over. They are shooting the scene three ways, once as the leading lady, once as the director and once as the producer wants it.

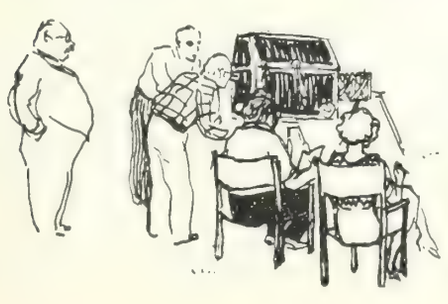
May 15th. They saw yesterday's rushes and decided to "cut" the scene altogether. It is misleading the audience, they said.

May 19th. Last week of shooting. We are doing big close-ups. The leading lady is called in the morning. The leading man in the afternoon. They are not supposed to know of one another's close-ups.

May 23rd. The two stars met in the restaurant at lunch time and had a big row when they found out about the close-ups.

May 24th. We finished shooting and are going to have a three-days' holiday.

May 26th. We were called back to the studio for retakes. They saw a first cut of the picture and thought it was terrible. There is tension in the air. We were told to keep in touch with the office. Something's going to happen.



*" The rushes were out of focus . . . the cameraman blamed hay-fever "*

May 29th. Something terrible has happened. A Dairy Farm has invested money in the Company and they are turning "One Way Street to Paradise" into a propaganda film for milk production. There was a riot on the set to-day. Everybody shouting at everybody, and threatening to walk out. The script-writer wept and shouted repeatedly several swear words he had learnt during the making of the picture. Eventually the producer came on the set and made a speech. Nobody should worry, he said, because at last they had found the "comic relief" which the picture had lacked all the time. Personally I thought it had lacked everything but that!

June 2nd. We're on location shooting cows. (Real ones!) It is lovely weather.

June 3rd. We saw the rushes. They were all out of focus. The cameraman said it was his hay-fever. He got the sack and said he was going down to the sea. I wish I had hay-fever too. General tension is growing. Everybody seems fed-up.

June 10th. We have finished shooting. They are busy "cutting" now.

June 20th. They saw a final cut of the picture and said it was lousy. But they say they couldn't possibly judge it without the music.

## Thought it Terrible

June 30th. They saw the picture with the music and still thought it was terrible. But they don't worry. The "dissolves" and "fades" will make all the difference.

July 11th. The "dissolves" and "fades" made no difference. Now they say they can't judge it by the "cutting copy" and they are waiting for the first combined print.

July 15th. They saw the print and said the picture smells. But they can't really judge it on a small screen.

July 18th. They saw the picture on a big screen at midnight and think it is impossible. As they were all tired they say they couldn't judge it. Especially in an empty cinema. The audience will make all the difference. Let's hope it will.

July 25th. To-night the picture will be trade shown. I pinched tickets and shall go with my girl friend.

July 26th. The trade-show was a terrific success. They had a marvellous Mickey Mouse. The atmosphere has changed. They all think it's a grand film.

July 29th. They are afraid the Ministry of Transport might object to the picture being called "One Way Street to Paradise," They are going to change its name.

## " The Happy Roundabout "

August 14th. To-morrow will be the première of "The Happy Roundabout"—that is the new name.

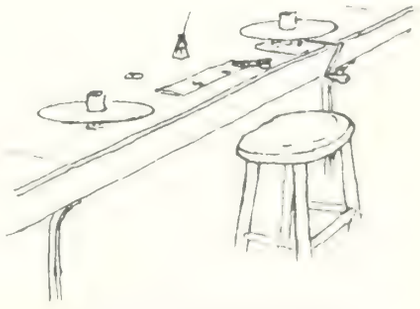
August 16th. The première is over. To-day they are suddenly allfed-up again and don't like the picture. It appears that somebody started a lawsuit against the Company saying that the script was based upon an advertisement which appeared some years ago in a French telephone directory. The director is going on a long holiday.

August 26th. We are going to start on a new film on the 1st of September.

Sept. 1st. Waiting all day. No shooting.

Sept. 2nd. Same as yesterday. They say the script isn't ready.

*ED. NOTE:* *REPEAT AD LIB.*



(*Drawings by Max Anderson*)

Miss Rosamund Smith

Brooke Wilkinson

Lord Tyrrell

# AN OPEN LETTER FROM AUSTRALIA TO

## By Mrs. K. M. P. Stone, film critic, "Film Weekly," Sydney

THE banning by you of the Australian film *Orphan of the Wilderness* has literally astounded the film lovers of Australia. That it should be on the grounds of "cruelty to animals" is more astounding still; for no weaker grounds could have been chosen, nor none more hypocritical. It is so well-known nowadays to even the layman that scenes of apparent cruelty on the screen practically never take place in reality, that it is quite impossible that you can be ignorant of this fact.

The scenes objected to by the Board, which banned *Orphan of the Wilderness* from being exhibited in Great Britain until such scenes were removed, were, the burning of the kangaroo star Chut's nose with a cigarette, leaving a scar on it; thrashing a kangaroo and preventing a kangaroo from being able to get a drink of water. All perpetrated in the picture by a sadistically minded animal "trainer." Every one of these scenes was carefully and cleverly faked by the producer. Not one of the animals received any harm or hurt.

### An Educational Picture

You are making yourselves ridiculous in the eyes of the world. This very film—as condemned by your Board—was given the wholehearted approval and co-operation of the New South Wales R.S.P.C.A., as an educational picture of great value to schoolchildren! Public school-children attended special screenings. Would the N.S.W. branch of the R.S.P.C.A. have so freely and gladly "sponsored" this film if it had contained the "cruelty" to which YOU object?

Ken. G. Hall, the producer-director of *Orphan of the Wilderness*, considers it the ". . . most cruel decision ever given by a censorship board in any part of the world. In endeavouring to find an explanation for a fiat which may rob us of 40 per cent earnings which the Australian film production business has a right to expect from the British market, I can only imagine the English Board of Film Censors knows pathetically little of cinema technique.

### A Vivid Sermon

"*Orphan* received the stamp of official approval of the R.S.P.C.A., *leading members of which were often in the studio when the animal sequences were made.* The film seeks to teach a lesson to people who do not realise their responsibilities to dumb animals. The censored sections—carefully 'faked'—give point to a vivid sermon against cruelty. As an animal lover myself I made it my personal responsibility to see that not one animal or kangaroo we used suffered for a second. The British Board of Film Censors cannot apparently know that *Orphan of the Wilderness* has been selected by the New South Wales, Victorian and Queensland State Education Departments as one of three official 'school pictures' of the year because of its educational value?

"I would suggest," adds Mr. Hall, "that England, the country in which foxes are harried and torn to death in the name of sport, the country in which the Grand National Steeplechase is cynically referred to as the 'Grand Crashional,' because of the numbers of unfortunate horses which are battered in the race each year, should take a reflective look at the Grand National newsreels.* I remember one passed by the British Board of Film Censors, in which thirty horses started, two finished. I felt physically ill at the finish. Evidently the British Censors think that an English horse breaking his neck is excellent screen fare—but a kangaroo with a scar PAINTED on his nose is revolting."

If you are—you British Board of Film Censors—so extremely sensitive to even faked scenes of cruelty, why don't you use your powers to get those nauseating and physically revolting newsreels of the "Grand Crashional" horserace suppressed? You would then be doing a fine job of really banning actual film scenes of physical cruelty.

I am a hard-boiled film critic of many years' standing and to preserve my own mental stability I have been obliged to harden my heart to many tender emotional and heartbreaking screen episodes. But one thing I can never witness without throbs of pity and indignation is the sequences of the "Grand Crashional," with its wreckage of human and animal victims, which you so readily and regularly pass as fit for public screen consumption. Some people are compelled to shut their eyes when these are shown in the theatre—others leave the theatre to avoid it, going out with a sickened heart.

### Those who Condone "Sport"

Those English people who condone this so-called "sport" and you the Censor Board which passes its presentation* should be thoroughly ashamed of its cruelty—not faked, but deplorably real.

Adding insult to injury you reject a really beautiful film like *Orphan of the Wilderness*. At times I have been compelled to sit through various dull and boring British films, in pursuance of my duties as film critic—this indeed is "cruelty to animals." You, however, appear to have no desire to ban any British films because their quality is far below what they should be.

Incidentally in a previous Cinesound Australian picture, *Thoroughbred*, a couple of cleverly faked scenes in which a star racehorse was concerned, depicting burning stables—and which you demanded eliminated owing to an apparent act of "cruelty"—also threw a sabot into your temperamental works.

Could it be you who passed *David Copper-*

**Newsreels in Britian are not censored by the B.B.F.C. Ed.*

(*These photographs were taken outside the Censor's Office. The Board would not identify them.*)

# THE BRITISH BOARD OF FILM CENSORS

*field* with its decidedly sadistic scenes? Why one judgment for British film producers and separate treatment for Australian? What about the scores of other films—American rodeos in countless newsreels and Western features—don't they count as cruelty to animals ?

I indite The British Board of Film Censors as being very obviously incompetent for your jobs. At least you should be consistent and be endowed with the elemental knowledge of technical film producing—and faking!

K. M. P. STONE

## *from Ida McAulay*

### (our regular correspondent)

THERE has been considerable comment out here upon British Censorship of recent Australian films.

In *Thoroughbred* the sequence showing horses in a burning stable was deleted on the ground that it depicted cruelty to animals. The same reason was given for cutting a scene from *Orphan of the Wilderness* in which a kangaroo is allegedly ill-treated. Those who are interested in film work in Australia are asking how much was excluded in England on the same grounds from the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture *Sequoia*, or from the Fox film *Smoky*, and the Warner Bros. production *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, in which last cruelty to horses must have been actual, not merely implied.

When interviewed regarding the cuts in *Orphan of the Wilderness*, Mr. Ken. G. Hall. the director of the film, said, among other things, "I can say to the English Censors that every one of the animals that worked in *Orphan of the Wilderness* is happy and back in its natural habitat," and he continued:—

"The basic factors of drama are life and death, joy and sorrow together and in contrast. If one makes a story of animals into a motion picture those elements must be dealt with to make a narrative, and perhaps, leave a message. The message that *Orphan of the Wilderness* left behind it—and I have dozens of letters and personal words to prove it—was one of kindness to animals. Towards the end of the picture we saw men fighting among themselves merely to protect an animal."

He concluded by suggesting that the uncensored version of this film should be shown to the newspaper men of Fleet Street. "If these men say the message of this picture is one of callousness and brutality I will gladly eat the whole 8,000 feet of it," he said.

It is interesting to note the attitude of various responsible bodies in Australia towards this film. The Education Departments in several States made it an official picture for exhibition to school children, and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals endorsed the film as one that would encourage kindness to animals, especially to Australian native fauna, and expressed the opinion that it exposed cruelty that is present, all too frequently, in the training and treatment of performing animals.

The two films mentioned above are not the only Australian productions to be censored in England. In *Rangle River* the climax in which two men fought with stockwhips was entirely deleted by the English censors. Incidentally this was almost the only realistic scene in the whole film.

Mr. Cecil Mason, General Manager of Columbia Pictures Proprietary Ltd., whose company made the film, when asked for his opinion regarding this action, replied that it was not the policy of his company to comment upon the action of Censors or Government Officials. Less responsible people, however, are vocally surprised that such films as *Rasputin* or *Winterset* should have been shown in England at all when such a comparatively mild scene in *Rangle River* has been so severely handled.

## *Censorship in Australia*

It appears that The Commonwealth Film Censorship censors all moving picture films which are imported into or exported from the Commonwealth of Australia, but it has no control over films made and exhibited in Australia until it is sought to export them. The censorship also censors advertising and publicity matter imported into Australia, but has no control over local advertising. New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria have censorship over films that have been allowed by the Commonwealth, but do not often exercise this power, though New South Wales rigidly excludes all "bushranging" stories in spite of the fact that it does not interfere with gangster pictures.

The regulations under which Commonwealth Censorship operates provides that in respect to imported films no film shall be registered which, in the opinion of the Censorship Board (a body consisting of three persons, two men and one woman, in which the Chief Censor has a deliberative, but not a casting vote, and the decision of the majority prevails), or, on appeal the opinion of the Appeal Censor—

(*a*) is blasphemous, indecent or obscene;
(*b*) is likely to be injurious to morality, or to encourage or incite to crime;
(*c*) is likely to be offensive to the people of any friendly nation;
(*d*) is likely to be offensive to the people of the British Empire;
(*e*) depicts any matter the exhibition of which is undesirable in the public interest.

The fact that whereas two or three years ago the normal number of feature films that had to be cut used to average about 50 per cent, last year it was only 24 per cent, is attributed by the Censorship partly to the Legion of Decency Campaign in America which was begun in 1934, and partly to public taste, which made the cleaner and more decent films pay better. The percentage of British films rejected last year was more than twice that of the American, with a higher percentage of cuts.

# TIMES CHANGE

# –so does SHELL

Shell has always been a contemporary spirit. It belongs to 1937 as much as it belonged to 1907. Between these years lies a big difference made up of countless small improvements, each of which was made immediately it became desirable and possible. If, in the Autumn, you buy a 1938 car, you will find that Shell suits it perfectly; for Shell keeps in step with motor-car design.

YOU CAN BE SURE OF SHELL

Buck Jones—"The Phantom Rider"

# TO BE CONTINUED

## The Serial Adventures of Buck Jones, Tom Mix and Tailspin Tommy

### by Gordon Hales

THERE may be quite a number of people who don't realise that the days of *The Perils of Pauline* are not past. Film serials still form an integral part of the programmes of certain cinemas. These cinemas usually occupy a minor status in provincial towns, and may be found tucked away down little side streets, with a conspicuous absence of neon lighting, stills pinned on crudely painted boards, and a six-sheet colour poster on either side of the entrance. Their audiences are composed mainly of "regulars," and attendances, therefore, do not vary much. That the serial helps to maintain this regular audience, there can be but little doubt, particularly with regard to the children, who practically fill the places every Saturday afternoon. They have followed each chapter from the first, and will follow each succeeding episode to the end, when they will discuss excitedly the prospects of the next serial.

Universal are the big producers of serials. They have now in distribution: *Secret Agent X9* (a detective story), *Flash Gordon* (a trip to Mars), *Jungle Jim*, *Ace Drummond*, *Phantom Rider*, and various Buck Jones cowboy films.

On the average they do about four fifteen-episode serials a year. They say serials are now becoming really high-class and very popular and they hope very soon to enter the cinema circuit fields. These films are most popular at children's matinees.

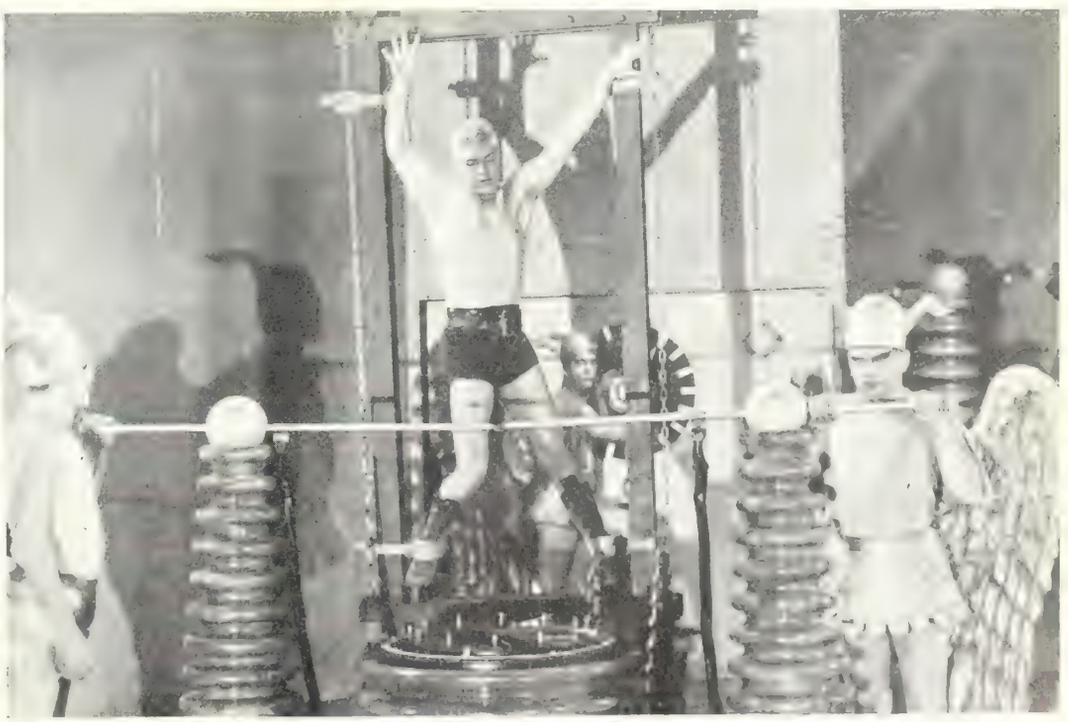
Columbia is also one of the few companies producing serials. They have four starting production, but names are not yet available.

Serials seem to vary but little in quality, although their popularity is more sharply divided. The names of Buck Jones and Tom Mix ensure success. Tailspin Tommy appears in some Great Air Mystery or other, and his adventures, so painfully and obviously protracted, are eagerly followed. Other serials enjoy a more dubious success. *The Amazing Adventures of the Clutching Hand—In 15 Thunderbolt Chapters* turns out to be bitterly disappointing, and although it is followed by the "regulars" with some display of interest, one can sense the absence of enthusiasm normally manifested by the bursts of applause and the muttered speculations as to what will happen next.

The details of the serial's style do not seem to change much. There is the usual main title: *The Adventures of Rex and Rinty*, *The Mystery Squadron*, *Custer's Last Stand*. The credit titles, the interesting and consistent feature of which is the exceptional number of people who seem to have been engaged in each department of the film's construction. At least four people write the scenario; not less than two are responsible for the photography, and the editing is always divided among several. Then there are various executive producers, and the director himself, who more often than not is two persons. The title of the particular chapter about to be screened follows. This is never prosaic. *The Black Ace Strikes*, *A Desperate Chance*, *The Final Stand* are the sort of things to be found. Next comes a résumé of the events contained in the previous episodes, often illustrated with stills of the main characters as they take their place in the development of the plot, and nearly always very badly expressed. These synopses almost invariably end with a word like 'but' or 'when' followed by a few significant dots. At this point the title is ripped off the screen by a particularly violent form of wipe, and the audience is transported slap into the last minute or so of the previous week's chapter.

The crucial moment arrives. Let's say that the hero, one John Blake, crumples up under a rain of bullets, and a demoniacal laugh is heard. (At this point the episode of the week before was rudely interrupted by a title bearing an enormous question mark and the question: "What happened to John Blake? See Chapter 9 showing at this theatre next week.") Chapter 9 leaves John Blake crumpled up on the ground for only a second or two, since he gets up and informs his companion that he would have been killed, if it hadn't been for his bullet-proof waistcoat. By such a series of anti-climaxes is each episode given an excuse to continue.

Sometimes the serial cheats. The hero may be seen falling off the edge of a cliff at the end of one chapter. At the beginning of the next, the sequence is found to have been re-edited, and an incident may occur at the same time and place as the apparent doom of the hero, which results in his being easily saved. Such obvious frauds, which are frequent, are not too kindly received by audiences. Yet serials continue to be followed with every semblance of interest. Perhaps this is maintained by speculation as to what the future naïve swindles will be.



Buster Crabbe in Universal's Serial on a Trip to Mars

# WORLD OPINION

## Philosophy of Dancing

IT HAPPENED THAT JUST before I went to the French Casino I had seen a Hindu dancer, Uday Shan-Kar, and had also read in an interview with him that American tap dancing had not impressed him at all until he saw the movies of Fred Astaire. So in my mind I had three different ideas on dancing simultaneously. Every step taken by Shan-Kar and his troupe and every gesture they make goes back to some ritual or some folk-habit foreign to us, and yet the entire effect has only the kind of strangeness which is enchanting. The dances which tell stories have plots which remind you of grand opera librettos or the translations of songs: "Three young girls who, while gathering flowers, are troubled by bees; and when they go bathing are suddenly frightened away by the sound of approaching footsteps." And the beginning of a very elaborate one: "The drama opens with the chorus lauding Shiva and his divine wife, Sati. Shiva is the God of Creation and Destruction. His dance creates and destroys the universe. Sati, who symbolises conjugal fidelity, dies of the grief she suffered when her own father mortally offended Shiva. Shiva, in deep affliction, retires into solitude and falls into a state of meditation, so that all creation is at a standstill."

These things do not matter. I have come in late and watched one of Shan-Kar's dances without the faintest knowledge of the story he was conveying and found that I understood it nearly enough, just as I think an Oriental would understand perfectly everything that Ray Bolger was saying in his superb dance at the end of *On Your Toes*. About tap dancing I am not so sure because I am not sure that tap dancing ever tries seriously to communicate anything except itself. There comes a moment in the movies when Mr. Astaire is turned down and he does a tap dance and there comes a moment when he is elated and he does a tap dance: it is no disparagement of Astaire himself to say that if he turned his back and did the two dances, you would hardly know which was gay and which sad. At its point of perfection tap dancing has all the beauty of a chemical or mathematical formula which works out perfectly. It is a diagram—and there are few things more satisfying.

What has really happened is this: tap dancing has become an instrument of percussion. In Shan-Kar's troupe there is a gentleman who places ten Indian drums, which are called tablas, in a semicircle at the centre of which he squats down and then proceeds to play on them using the wrist, the ball of the hand, the flat hand, the fingers and finger tips with incredible speed, producing rhythms so complex that swing music seems positively simple in comparison. If you remember Jack Powell who used to apear in vaudeville playing on chairs, tables, tin pans and everything *including* the kitchen stove, you will have a faint approximation of the speed and intricacy of this Indian drum playing. What struck me as I heard it was that a great tap dancer is doing substantially the same sort of thing. Footwork and the sounds produced by footwork have become inordinately important and only a few dancers like Astaire, Bolger and Paul Draper add something by the movements of their entire bodies. A lot of dancers dance with their faces, but that unfortunately does not help. No American dancer I know can use his arms, his head, his hands as Oriental dancers do and Shan-Kar has in addition a rapid movement of his neck which is something like the darting of a snake and something like throwing your thumb out of joint and is altogether the despair of Western imitators.

I suppose that if you put your mind to it you could develop a whole philosophy about the difference between the East and the West based on the fact that our dancers are separatists about their legs, whereas the men of the East combine all their movements into a perfect unity, but I have discovered that being philosophical about dances is the quickest way of missing the satisfaction of watching dancers. There is no mysticism about shuffling off to Buffalo and I hope there never will be.

Gilbert Seldes, *Esquire*

## Wireless and Danger of Uniformity

THAT NEW FACTOR in our civilisation, the wireless, has one main ill attaching to it and one main good. The main ill is the increase of mechanical uniformity; the main good is the novel enlargement of that on which the human mind feeds, instruction and entertainment. All the major consequences of the innovation attach to these two roots.

A succession of new instruments, going back to the appearance of the printing press nearly 500 years ago, have made more and more for a mechanical uniformity in such social life as was subject to their influence. Now complete uniformity, excellent as a means for organising men to a particular end is in itself destructive of life; and when it is mechanical, actually hostile to life. Life is organic diversity in unity. When unity is mechanical in quality and universal in application it kills the diversity and thereby kills life.

This danger from uniformity is not greatly enhanced by State monopoly, for such is the nature of our modern large-scale instruments that they tend to exclude competition in any case, and fall under the power of great units of capital. If you have not State monopoly in wireless then you have wireless at the service of wealth. Uniformity then must be accepted as a necessary evil attaching to use of wireless in any form.

The least of the evils attaching to uniformity is the decay of zest through the absence of contrast. What the worst of its evils may be it would be difficult to discover. Among the worst is the absence of reaction to stimulus, of which an example in point is the popular remark: "The worst of the wireless is you cannot answer back." Widespread simultaneous diffusion, among millions, of the same fact or the same opinion excludes not only opposing fact and opposing opinion, but the modifying fact and the modifying opinion. Uniformity is the enemy of life and therefore also necessarily the enemy of growth, whether the growth of evil or the growth of good. Any method of thought—a philosophy, a religion—grows, like everything else, from a seed; and the seed is commonly the mind of one man convincing, at first, a few. Each of those few convinces another few and the general effect enlarges in geometrical progression. All mechanical, simultaneous, and universal methods are in direct contradiction with this fundamental process, lacking which society grows sterile.

There is a loss of vitality when the book replaces the living word, another greater loss when the urban newspaper replaces the book, and another, still greater, when universally diffused wireless replaces the Press.

So much for the main evil and danger. The advantages are more obvious. They are, as was just said, the very wide diffusion of human mental food: knowledge and recreation. As in a great many modern things, there is a risk of underestimating the good about them, through following the judgment of too small a number: through following the judgment of the comparatively well-to-do and the comparatively leisured. Men and women without experience of the grievous limitations under which the mass of their fellow-beings suffer can with difficulty appreciate a new widespread popular benefit. Reason may tell them that the benefit is there, but only experience can render that conclusion vivid. Now wireless has this very great civic good attached to it that, it brings recreation, and instruction on facts, to vast numbers: one may say to, potentially, every household in the State. It is so cheap that it is at almost everybody's disposal. The drawback here is that the instruction cannot be the most useful kind of instruction, for much the most useful kind of instruction is instruction in ultimate truth: sound philosophy. Instruction by wireless will hardly be more than an instruction on facts, and a mass of disconnected fact is of little value to the mind.

Hilaire Belloc, *Radio Times*

## Conquest of Cancer

THE LATEST EDITION of *March of Time* contains an episode entitled the *Conquest of Cancer*. The greater part of the film has been made in the United States. Several of the leading authorities on cancer appear without their names being mentioned and make a series of statements emphasising the fact that cancer is curable and that many thousands of persons have been cured of cancer because they have sought medical advice sufficiently early. They warn the public against the use of quack cures on which, in the United States, a large amount of money is being wasted. The scene then shifts to England where Sir Kingsley Wood appears and teaches the same lesson. The film has evidently been editorially supervised by a responsible medical authority in America and it proves that the admittedly difficult task of educating public opinion with regard to cancer can be accomplished effectively and at the same time with tact and restraint. The English portion is not as strictly anonymous as the American, though no exception can be taken to the discreet reference to distinguished workers made by Sir Kingsley Wood. Danger lies in this use of the cinema to advertise individual institutions. It must not be allowed to weaken the self denying code of anonymity that the medical profession has for very good reasons imposed upon itself.

Editorial, *The Lancet*

# WORLD OPINION

## Hollywood and the Bread-line

THERE HAS BEEN considerable talk, much of it loose in character, about labour troubles and the probability of a strike within the industry. Such predictions not only are unwise but are almost impossible to make, since there are many elements that complicate the labour situation here and make a penetrating analysis difficult. It is a fight in which neither faction could hope to enlist much sympathy.

On one side, the studios are making too much money, are governed in many instances by incompetent heads and are regarded by the outside world as too extravagant and too wasteful to attract a militant defence; on the other, while there are many divisions of the industry woefully underpaid, particularly in the light of salaries in other branches, it is doubtful that any strenuous movement could be stimulated in the nation's union ranks in behalf of people making upward of $200 a week. The wage scales of most of the crafts preclude picket lines with banners reading, "We want bread for our babies."

The Screen Actors Guild appears to be in a peculiar situation in relation to the general set-up. While their contributions to the war chest would be valuable, they would alienate public sympathy. In the NRA days, when Washington was jammed with participants in various industry struggles, a perspiring conciliator emerged from a conference room with a telegram in his hand. He exclaimed to a group of newspaper men as he waved the voluminous wire in the air, "Here we are in that room trying to get enough for thousands of coal miners to eat on, and a lot of Hollywood actors who are making better than $1,000 a week send me this to tell me they are unhappy."

Douglas W. Churchill, *N.Y. Sunday Times*

## Civilisation is Exciting

IN A SENSE, I suppose, you might argue that all films are propaganda for something or other. If they make you feel satisfied with the world as it is you can call them propaganda for the existing social order. Most films are like that. In a more specific sense, films can be propaganda in that they make you feel that certain things, certain ideals, certain modes of living are specially worthwhile.

A *Pasteur* makes you feel the nobility of scientific service; a *Fury* makes you feel the necessity of law; and *All Quiet* makes you feel the futility of fighting; a *Charge of the Light Brigade* makes you feel the "glory" of being killed.

Naturally no two of us react in quite the same way to the propagandist stimuli of any film. It happens to be my private conviction that writing books and even sorting letters are more civilised forms of human activity than, say, forming fours and polishing buttons and learning how to squeeze a trigger. Likewise, it is my private habit to measure the strength of a man's patriotism not by what he does in the hysteria of war, but by what he does day by day to make his country a worthier and more civilised place in time of peace.

I applaud films like *Night Mail* and *Cover to Cover* because they make you feel what an exciting thing our civilisation is to be living in; they find their urgency in the facts of the social process, their drama in the ordinary world of ordinary men and women.

And that, in my view, is the main social function of the cinema, the main justification of the energy and capital that the film industry attracts to itself—to help our personal citizenship to keep up with the march of the world of which we are citizens.

The idea that art can deal with the individual human soul in isolation is dead. Our modern poets, for example, will have none of it. Deeper sympathy for our fellowmen must spring from greater understanding of the community, its organisation, its stresses, its psychology. The highest goals of our choicest spirits to-day are social goals, not personal goals.

That is why I applaud *The March of Time*—when the Censor doesn't distort it—why I applaud a *Pasteur*, a *Fury*, a *White Angel*, why I become excited at the news of a *Stars Look Down* and a *South Riding*.

Frank Evans, *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*

## Mechanical Aids to Learning

THE FILMS AND WIRELESS have already begun to play an important part in education and there is every prospect of their becoming even more important. It must be remembered that they do not so much introduce us to a new kind of education as provide additional opportunities for making existing forms of teaching more concrete and interesting and for linking up the work of the school with what is going on in the outside world. Certainly, the teacher who is able to employ films or wireless as an aid to instruction may find in one or the other of them an instrument for infusing fresh life and purpose into his syllabuses. But the attention of children usually needs guiding and directing, as otherwise what has been introduced as an aid may become a danger. Many teachers have worked out a proper technique for getting the best out of mechanical aids. This technique will emphasise, as a rule, the importance of adequate preparation and skilful following-up. It may be added that schools which do not possess either a film projector or a wireless set may still in many districts do a great deal for their pupils through the sympathetic discussion of what the children see at the local cinemas or hear by wireless at home.

The teacher will also consider how far the cinematograph film and the wireless broadcast can serve the aims of the teaching of History. Through these media, representations of the past, of the daily life of the people, of their work and their recreations, of the great changes in industry and commerce can do much to help children to make pictures in their minds of what the past was really like. And, if the teaching of History is to touch events of the present day, teachers may find it useful to have at their disposal, as opportunity offers and as need arises, material presented by one, who is outside the school and who perhaps possesses greater knowledge of national and world affairs or greater power of impartial presentation.

Both the lantern and the epidiascope have begun to play an increasingly important part in the teaching of geography. Of the two, the latter is more generally useful for school purposes. An instrument capable of throwing images both from solid objects and diagrams as well as from lantern slides is of the greatest value. Teachers can make transparencies of their own diagrams and other illustrations, without undue difficulty. Where the school possesses a cinematograph apparatus the film, used under suitable conditions, will do much to give life and reality to the instruction. There is now a good stock of films which can be used in the teaching of geography.

An increasing number of schools are now equipped with wireless sets and with a skilful teacher the wireless lessons may become a valuable part of the school's geography teaching. It is possible to hear at first-hand vivid decriptions of the countries of which the children are reading. With adequate preparation and following up, these lessons may give a life and colour to the work which is sometimes lacking.

Although direct contact with nature is the basis of all true nature study, the children's experiences need not be limited to what can be observed and discovered at first-hand. The Junior School should have its Natural History Library, consisting, for example, of reference books which the children can learn to consult, of reading books about plants and animals and of animal stories. It should also have its collection of pictorial illustrations.

Use should be made, where possible, of the optical lantern and the micro-projector.

The use of films in teaching has been greatly hindered by the high cost of the apparatus required and by the unsuitable character of of most of the films available, though these are now being rapidly improved. Their use makes it possible to widen the scope of Science teaching and may also be justified as a means of rapid recapitulation. It should not, however, be forgotten that Science teaching should never depend on pictures when real things are available.

*Board of Education Handbook of Suggestions for Teachers.*

## Why?

1. WHY IS IT THAT WHEN you enter a theatre and, before the curtain goes up, observe in the orchestra pit a lady harpist, the ensuing musical exhibit generally turns out to be a bore?

2. Why is it that when, in the first act of a play treating of humdrum married life, the wife complains to her husband about a leak in the roof, the rest of the play invariably proves to be a waffle?

3. Why is it that the deeply emotional scenes of an English actor are always better if he happens to be suffering from a bad cold?

4. Why is it that logically reticent and lifelike direction of a historical play in which the characters wear swords and uniforms always deadens the play and makes it tedious, while a liberal dose of the old ham direction makes it relatively palatable?

5. Why is it that the actors and actresses in secondary rôles in Shakespearean plays seem always to believe that the plays were written by Gounod and accordingly read even such lines as "Bring me my boots; I will unto the king," "Come home with me to supper," or "Ah, my sour husband," as if they were composed for a church organ? George Jean Nathan, *Esquire*

# TEN YEARS OF DOCUMENTARY

## by Basil Wright

**The resignation of John Grierson from the G.P.O. Unit marks the end of the first chapter in the story of a new and powerful movement. The present issue of W.F.N. seems a fitting opportunity to sum up the present achievements of the realist film in the service of the community, and to look ahead to its future developments.**

FROM one aspect the emphasis might all be on the side of Grierson's individual building-up of the realist film movement. It does, in point of fact, owe an incalculable debt to his forceful personality, his far-sighted production policies, his complete integrity, and not least to his genius for film-making and the training of film makers. But, he himself, we are sure, would prefer at this stage to stress the wider aspects, and to pay some tribute to the foresight of the British civil servants who have sponsored the experiment of bringing alive the problems and realities of the life of these islands and the Empire. The work of Sir Stephen Tallents, first at the E.M.B. and later at the G.P.O., gave a lead which has since been followed by many of the major industrial concerns of this country. It was within these governmental terms and with the assistance of Sir Stephen Tallents that Grierson—battling sometimes against incomprehensions and suspicions—worked out the basic structure of the documentary movement.

With the acceptance in 1929 of *Drifters* as an unqualified success, the E.M.B. offered the opportunity of a permanent small-scale film unit. Between January 1930 and July 1933 this Unit increased its production personnel from two to over thirty, produced over 100 films (some of which went to the theatres, but most to the formation of the Empire Film Library) and established a group of directors and cameramen united by a common enthusiasm and a common aim.

### Nation-wide Recognition

The E.M.B. films received nation-wide recognition, and by 1932 the possibilities of this type of production began to be closely considered both by other Government departments and by commercial organisations. Under Grierson's guidance, and with directors lent by the E.M.B., films were produced by the Ministry of Agriculture, the Air Ministry and the Travel Association. Of outside firms, His Master's Voice, the Orient Line, and the Ceylon Tea Propaganda Board entered the field; and the Shell Marketing Co. set up its own film department with an E.M.B. man at its head.

At the same time, educationists and social workers all over the country were increasing their demands for this new type of film. The resources of the Empire Film Library were badly strained by the constant flow of requests for the loan of films. And finally,the audiences in the cinemas were applauding with an unexpected enthusiasm the group of E.M.B. shorts of which Flaherty's *Industrial Britain* was the patronymic.

In 1933 when the E.M.B. was abolished, the documentary movement was too well established to disappear with it. Still under the aegis of Tallents, the Unit passed to the Public Relations department of the G.P.O.

And here Grierson, working within apparently narrower terms of reference (no longer "bringing the Empire alive" but presenting the story of the Post Office activities) actually widened the whole field. Taking the word "Communications" in its widest sense, he showed how from the presentation of process or manufacture one could reach out to the more important implications of organisation, and finally to the genuine idea of modern internationalism represented by such bald names as Faraday House, Rugby, the Meteorological office, or a Post Office sorting bench.

Simultaneously, the development of similar production policies outside the Government continued to increase—but it was to Grierson and his work at the G.P.O. that outside sponsors came for advice on production policy and personnel. From being lent out for specific jobs G.P.O. directors now went out for keeps. Gas, Oil, Shipping, Air Lines were all on the move. Realist organisations sprang up—Strand films being the pioneer. The Association of Realist Film Producers formed a central focus for advice, and presented a common front of documentary directors. G.B. Instructional, which antedates the realist movement, also entered the field with enthusiasm and success under Bruce Woolfe.

All the time, less spectacularly but with determined progress, the non-theatrical field —always to the forefront of Grierson's policy—had been developing.

### The New Audience

Post Office road shows, and the film supply of the Empire and G.P.O. film libraries, were tapping a public of amazing size and enthusiasm. G.P.O. non-theatrical audiences rose to over five million a year. The distribution side of the G.P.O. film unit now almost overtopped the production organisation in size and personnel. Outside sponsors began to think in terms of non-theatrical distribution and increased their production programmes accordingly.

To-day Grierson steps out as Film Consultant into the wider fields created by his own efforts. He can survey a movement whose power and ramifications are more than national. The young men and women he has trained, and continues to train, are established in many and varied fields of production activity; at Strand, producing films for the National Book Council, for Imperial Airways, for the National Council for Social Service, for the Zoological Society; at Realist Film Unit, working for the Gas Light & Coke Company and for the League of Nations; through A.R.F.P. organising production programmes for the Oil and Gas industries, for the Travel Association and similar bodies. The prospect may seem unlimited. What is the future going to be?

### Tradition of Experiment

Firstly, the importance of the Government Film Units cannot be too strongly stressed. It is only through such units as the G.P.O. that long term vision—the maturing of films over a period and the training of new directors—can be properly held. Outside, financial dictates and urgencies compel a less leisurely approach, and are quite excellently establishing a new and vital technique suited to the circumstances. But the tradition of experiment rests with the Government. Under no other conditions can new possibilities in sound and colour be given a chance to develop, and the compelling vitality revealed in such films as *Night Mail* or *We Live in Two Worlds* be nursed—maybe over 12 months—into existence.

No survey of the realist movement can do other than stress this importance, and stress also the creative approach which the G.P.O. film unit represents. Its presentation of the Post Office theme in terms of internationalism, in terms of common humanity, has been,

## Ten Years of Documentary (cont.)

and is, one of those phenomena possible only in a democratic state, and one for which not merely the film-makers themselves but citizens at large should be genuinely grateful.

It is from this enlightened approach to the field of propaganda and public relations that the production programmes of the commercial and industrial sponsors are taking their lead. And though many may think that the Gas films, dealing sincerely and objectively with urgent national programmes such as slums, schools or nutrition, should in all nature be produced by Government departments, it must be remembered that the first realisation of the importance of this type of approach came from the Government itself.

Secondly, what are to be the new developments? The new Film Centre now founded by Grierson and Elton may be regarded as the focal point for the future. The possibilities of the realist film have widened beyond measure during the last few years. We may envisage therefore, firstly, the continuation of the pioneer work of the G.P.O. film unit, and look to it to continue its policy of creative experiment and the maturing of ideas and individuals; we may hope too to see a widening of film activities on the Governmental front and the production of films of vital social value by the different Ministries. Secondly, we can look to the sponsored films for even greater developments in the field, not merely of public relations, but of education. Thirdly, a consolidation of the tie-up between the realists and the *March of Time*—already closely bound together both in personnel and common interests. And fourthly, a step forward into the field of feature films, a new type of feature, in which the realist tradition will combine with the best production values of the theatrical movie to produce, on an economic basis, a further development of the use of cinema as a living force not merely in national interests, but also in that wider international field which has no frontiers between race and race.

### A part in National life

Judged by commercial standards, the realist movement is small. By any other (and perhaps more important) standards it is already playing a forceful part in our national life. It will be Grierson's job to see that the men he has trained and the machinery he has set up continue to operate with the same standards of integrity which he has by long-term and personal effort so firmly established.

The motives of the realists are often under suspicion. Blimps and fools accuse them of Bolshevism, and some sections of the Film Trade claim that through their sponsored films and free shows they are muscling in unfairly on a legitimate field of commercial enterprise. But so far, the opposition has accomplished little, and one may suspect that it will be finally conquered by the realisation that in serving the realist interests the realist directors are serving the whole cause of cinema, be it in terms of Hollywood and Pinewood or, more humbly but perhaps more importantly, the schoolroom or the public lecture hall.

With the realist film movement a new and valuable element has almost imperceptibly entered the somewhat hectic world of cinema—a sense that national interests, in all branches of social and community life, can be not merely served, but actually made more vital, more individually important to the ordinary man. In a world where democracy is fighting an uphill battle, this cannot be regarded as unimportant, and it will not be only his close colleagues who wish Grierson more strength to his arm in his new ventures.

(*cont. bottom next column*)

# *"Being a Friend of a Friend who Knows..."*

## "That is the cause of it all," says E. G. CROOKALL analysing the British "flops"

*FIRE Over England* is typical of the ambitious, expensive English film that fails to ring the bell. There are moments of artistic worth—the cross-cutting of the sound in the interview with the Spanish ambassador, but they are lost in the general failure. The characters do not live. They are romantic, story-book characters who walk about with no appreciation of their situation or rank. An attempted regicide turns out to be a demented hag with an empty pistol watched with eager attention by the Spanish plotters! A suddenly introduced sequence which fizzles out like the murmurings of a self-conscious schoolboy caught in the act. And you might well ask, in the act of what? The pro-Spanish faction may be stylised and theatrical when denounced by Elizabeth and even persuaded by a heart to heart talk on a subject which they must have threshed out among themselves. Surely a group of experienced men well paid, presumably, by Spain would not be converted in about 30 seconds by a regal chat! No, dramatic licence is stretched too far. This is Victorian provincial drama, and the experience of the 20th hard-bitten century of plotters is that they don't behave like naughty schoolboys.

The Elizabethans lived in a small way, their houses were good but not palatial, their ships were small but efficient. The background of the Queen in this film is something akin to that of a Roman queen if such a thing had been. Interiors soar amidst a Mediterranean clarity. It is indeed a golden age. But is this true? The Elizabethan room in spite of its advance in the use of windows was essentially dull, if not dark. The characteristic of a Spanish setting is contrasted brilliant light and shade. The settings for historical drama should not glisten. A goodly size for a ship of that day was 70 tons. Drake himself sailed the Atlantic in a 60 tonner. The boats on view here were the same size as the Spanish.

### Life of the people

But enough of mere pulling to pieces. What is, essentially the matter with most English flops? It rests partly in the characters who seem always removed from the life of the people. Any audience however ignorant feels there is something wrong when a historical film gleams as *Rembrandt* does. Not that it appreciates any the more a film that flings stark realism at it in the manner of *Sabotage*. If Flora Robson had been allowed to give Elizabeth life as she was obviously capable of doing the film might have been carried to a triumphant success by public opinion. For the English have sufficient sense of the dramatic to appreciate good acting and are always willing to welcome a new face if it has anything interesting to say.

"*If Flora Robson had been allowed to give Elizabeth life. . . .*"

The English film has a wealth of star players which it uses, and justifiably, from the stage. But together with this rich talent it also catches in its net a fish which is becoming increasingly a liability of the native film. Small-part players. Until something is done to relieve those people who do their work for the fun of it, of any possibility of getting before a camera, the English film is doomed. Nothing smashes more completely a good scene than the grinning aping of a crowd of inefficient extras. There is no lack of talent for small-parts, it is lack of opportunity and too much of someone being a friend of a friend who "knows . . . ." that is the cause of it all.

Production detail seems too elementary to be considered as a failing of any film organisation however young. Yet we are entertained to "a painted ship upon a painted ocean" in *The Ghost goes West*. Why, in a film where money was obviously not stinted, couldn't a camera crew have gone to Southampton and obtained a picture of a real liner instead of the painfully "model" affair that floated for a brief time before our eyes? The English industry copies Hollywood but forgets what Hollywood doesn't—detail matters, small-parts matter, a star's characteristics matter. London Films thinks in spectacles and history, but casts in Mayfair and forgets Liverpool.

"The 'Birthplace' all nicely done up"

# AND MALT DOES MORE THAN SHAKESPEARE CAN— (*With Apologies to Housman*)

"In Stratford-on-Avon people do not rely on Will Shakespeare for entertainment," *says*

*RICHARD CARR*

SIR JOHN SQUIRE once wrote a story describing the catastrophic effect upon Stratford-on-Avon of a discovery proving that the author of the plays was not Shakespeare but Bacon. The truth of the imaginary picture drawn of the results for Stratford is vividly borne out by a visit to the town. If anyone else did write those plays and it is found out, Stratford would jump bang into first place among distressed areas.

The whole town seems to live by catering for the pilgrims who pour into Stratford from early April to late September. There are hotels, boarding-houses, tea-shops, restaurants, and pubs galore. There are shops filled with mementoes of all shapes, sizes and colours; medallions, flower-pots, ash-trays and pipe-racks. There seem to be more reproductions of Shakespeare portraits here than there are words to his plays; and more alleged relics of his life and times than there are bad shillings in slot machines. And, judging by the number of mulberry trees and pieces of mulberry tree on view, Shakespeare must have planted more mulberry trees than Mr. Hore Belisha has Beacons.

Not everyone depends upon the tourist trade for their work—not everyone, but nearly everyone ; such trades, for example, as building and transport must get much of their work as a consequence of the tourist trade. There is, however, still some honest farming in the neighbourhood, which, together with its allied trades and crafts, helps to keep Stratford a pleasant country town in spite of its highly commercialised attractions. But to visit the town in search of information about the film tastes of its inhabitants feels at first like searching for the allegorical snowflake in hell. After an hour's walk around the shops, museums and other showplaces (including the "Birthplace," all nicely done up and looking from the outside like a house on a London housing estate), the most ardent supporter of cinemas begins to feel intimidated.

Closer inspection reveals that things are not so black for the cinema in Stratford as they at first seem. The people of Stratford may depend for their livelihood upon the "pudding faced" effigy in the church, upon the season of plays at the dignified Memorial Theatre, upon the reverent inspections of the excavated foundations of Shakespeare's house, but they certainly do not depend upon Will Shakespeare's plays for their leisure-time entertainment.

## The Memorial Theatre

Perhaps this would not be admitted openly: the fetish is too strong. Mentioning Shakespeare to ordinary people in Stratford is like mentioning the Holy Ghost in a railway carriage full of commercial travellers. But a visit to the Memorial Theatre and to the cinema reveals the truth: there is a very considerable difference in the composition of the audience, not by any means to the detriment of the cinemagoers. If the Memorial Theatre depended upon the patronage of local people it would not last a month: the cinema, on the other hand, whilst benefiting to some extent from the summer-time visitors, depends all the year round on local support. (It must be recorded too, in fairness to all classes, that a royal visitor of recent years showed a similar preference. A Near-Eastern potentate arrived in full regalia to visit the town of Shakespeare's birth and death, but instead of going to the Theatre went to the pictures!)

Lest this statement about the preference of Stratford people should seem an accusation, let me hasten to say that the reasons for their preference are not peculiar to them. Stratford cinemagoers may be less sophisticated than Londoners, but in this they are no different from the cinemagoers of most semi-rural and provincial towns. It is the pressure and needs of modern life which make them cinemagoers and make the cinema a vital element in spare-time enjoyment that the Memorial Theatre can never hope to be. It should be added that the contest is not so much between Shakespeare and the cinema as between the cinema and the Memorial Theatre.

For, as presented at the Memorial Theatre, set in the artificial Shakespeare-worship Stratford atmosphere, the plays must smack of education and ritual: they become showpieces, far removed from life and reality, deprived of the guts which could make them sufficiently alive and real to attract ordinary people. To compare an average American crime film, with its fast, slick dialogue, its live people, and its sustained interest and action with the mincing and posturings of the present-day British theatre is not only to realise why ordinary people prefer—where choice is possible, of course—the cinema, but also to get a considerable insight into the reasons why British films are so poor and lifeless compared to their American rivals. This stage tradition, a comparatively recent one, by the way, has been imposed on the British film.

Stratford's only cinema, the Picture House, is surprisingly large and comfortably seated. It has a fair-sized stage which was used for the Shakespeare Season while the present Theatre was being built. I am regretfully compelled to record that at the back of the cinema is a mulberry tree.

The Manager of Stratford's Picture House is an unusually interesting personality. Most cinema managers have come over from managing music halls or theatres with the change in public taste. Not so Mr. Waller Jeffs. He has grown up with the industry and has been exhibiting films for almost as long as the industry has lived.

## Early History

He took up the business of showing films—in shops, in halls, in theatres and at fairs—when the highbrows scorned the cinema and the learned declared it to be a passing craze, a nine-days' wonder. Mr. Jeffs recalls the first public exhibition of cinematography by Trewey, assisted by veteran Matt. Raymond, at the Polytechnic, Regent Street, in 1896; the simultaneous exhibition of his Animatograph by Robert Paul at the Northampton Institute and the subsequent rapid spread of the industry so that, by the end of 1899, some score of projectors were in operation in all parts of the country.

# Film Studios—Hours and Working Conditions

by The Film Council

**This is an introductory article to an examination of the hours and working conditions of British film technicians, to appear in our next issue.**

To ensure a satisfactory general level of production quality it is not only necessary that the material resources available should be allocated in a rational and economic manner, it is even more important that the creative energies of those who make the films are given a real chance to exert themselves. Next to the wage problem the factors most important from this point of view are hours of labour and the physical conditions under which it is performed. For it must be obvious to all that in a productive process in which so much depends on the judgment—artistic and technical—of the men on the job, quality is conditional upon the absence of strain and fatigue. The problem of British production quality is therefore to an even greater extent a problem of British studio conditions, than it is one of British film finance. In order to ascertain what are these conditions, the Film Council has decided to make a questionnaire enquiry among technicians, who are asked to give concrete descriptions of their working conditions in the various studios during the last 12 months. The first results of this enquiry, which will also cover film laboratories, will be presented to our readers in the next issue of *W.F.N.*

The following summary of the collective agreement which governs the conditions of labour in all film production enterprises in France will serve as an appropriate preface for next month's report. One of the many gains of organised labour since the advent of the Popular Front Government, the agreement between the C.G.T. (the technicians' union) and the C.G.P.F. (the employers' association), was not accomplished without difficulties. Even at the last moment technical reasons enabled the employers to delay its actual signature, originally arranged for June 7th, 1936, until almost the end of the year. During the intervening period a far less advantageous agreement was signed between the employers' organisations and a "professional syndicate" launched for this purpose in August, but the established union was able to defeat this manœuvre and the original contract is now in force.

After defining the parties, territory, and duration of the agreement, the French technicians' charter asserts the right of all salaried employees in film production enterprises to trade union organisation (art. 3). Articles 4 to 10 define in detail the machinery of representation safeguarding the interests of the staff in their relations with the employers in each establishment.

### Number of Technicians

Of great importance to our problem of working conditions is article 11, which fixes the minimum number of technicians to be employed on a feature film and defines the precise occupations of each. Only three forms of contract are allowed by the agreement: engagement for a film (in which case the period of production must be fixed in advance); engagement for six months; and for a year (art. 12). Indemnities and other conditions arising from a breach of contract or from cessation of production for other reasons are specified in detail in the following article. Regularly employed technicians have the right to one month's paid holiday per year (art. 14).

Hours of labour may not exceed the legal maximum for French industry: *i.e.* 40 hours a week. Work on Sundays and feast days is prohibited (except under clearly defined conditions). Daily working hours must be fixed by an agreed, normal and regular schedule, taking into account the technical requirements of production. They must be distributed between 8.30 a.m. and 6 p.m., and there must be a break of 1½ hours between 12 and 2 p.m. Overtime is permissible in cases of urgency only by agreement with the staff delegates and must on no account exceed one hour. Moreover, for each hour of overtime worked in this way, 1¼ hour must be deducted from the working week. If the story requires shooting on Sundays or holidays, the following day must be a rest day for the technicians. The remaining sections of this key article (15) define certain exceptions in the regulation of overtime work for assistant directors, decorators, make-up men, location directors, dressers and cutters, and the manner in which these workers are to be recompensed.

### Night Work

Article 16 allows night work only for out-door night scenes. Each night shift must be followed and preceded by 12 hours' rest and cannot extend beyond the maximum duration fixed for day work. There must be a ½ hour break after four hours of shooting. The employers must provide at their own cost a meal and facilities for the return of each staff member to his home. The time spent on night work during a week must be recompensed by a reduction of double the amount of time from that week.

On work outside the studio, provision must be made for a proper mid-day meal at the expense of the employers, the cost of which must not be less than 20 francs (art. 17), while the conditions and allowances for travelling by rail, boat or air are specified at considerable length in the following article (they provide, among other points, first class travel by day and sleeping-car accommodation by night).

On signing the contract the employer must deposit the total amount of the salaries stipulated in it with a bank of guarantee accepted by the union (art. 19).

Articles 20 to 25 provide respectively for the replacement of technicians absent on account of illness; ordinary and special insurances against accidents, etc.; methods of engagement; regular cleaning, disinfecting, paint-spraying, etc., *outside* shooting hours, the prohibition of cellulose paint, and other safety measures; the deposition of two copies of each contract with the trade union, in addition to the copies held by the employer and the employee; and the grades of technicians whose names must appear on the titles and programmes of the films produced.

The agreement terminates with a schedule of minimum salaries for each grade of technicians, providing for automatic adjustments to changes in the cost of living.

Such are the terms of the contract that determines the conditions of work in every type of film production enterprise in France at the present time. In the absence of any general agreement for the British industry as a whole, we must await the results of our questionnaire enquiry before we can outline the conditions under which English technicians carry out their tasks.

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## Stratford-on-Avon *(contd.)*

"We were often our own producers in those days," recalls Mr. Jeffs, "and made up our programmes with topical and interest subjects and with what specal 'features' could be obtained. One of the most successful of the early 'feature' films was the *Voyage Across the Atlantic*, produced by Sydney Carter, who wrote the scenario, edited the film and arranged the incidental music and effects. This film ran for thirteen weeks, daily performances, at the Curzon Hall, Birmingham, and the 'storm scenes' are remembered by people in that city to this very day."

Mr. Waller Jeffs also remembers early attempts to synchronise sound with pictures: "I myself tried," he says, "at the old Curzon Hall, but it was not a great success."

Mr. Jeffs rightly feels that the part played by the travelling showman-exhibitor in the building of the cinema industry and in helping to make possible its leap to first place in the leisure-time lives of the modern generation, is not given the recognition it deserves in the existing histories of the cinema.

In spite of their exalted surroundings the tastes of Stratford's cinemagoers are very much the same as those of other semi-rural towns. They steadily refuse to like the so-called intelligent or the obviously educational picture. They like good action pictures, good drama and above all good musicals. Among their favourites are George Arliss, Gracie Fields and the Lynn-Walls team.

One leaves Stratford feeling that an industry which can evoke continued response, which can give such vital entertainment and such real pleasure to ordinary people is somehow coming closer to the art of Shakespeare and to the real living content of drama than ritualistic presentations of Shakespeare or the present-day theatre can ever hope to be.

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# *Romance and Adventure In Real Things*

## The Imperial Institute and its Film Library

by

Sir Harry Lindsay, K.C.I.E., C.B.E.
Director of the Imperial Institute

(*Fourth article in the series on Film Libraries*)

**Botha's Hall, Congo Caves** (*Courtesy S. African Rlwys. and Harbours.*)

WE were all young once, but our trouble is that we so easily forget. We forget the romances and the adventures which once used to sweep us off our feet and made us thrill to the glad madness of life, if only for a moment or two. The golden moment came and passed, and we could never control its coming or its going, but from the mere fact that it had occurred sprang the conviction that it would recur; and when such moments did recur they proved as nothing else could that life was seriously worth living.

I have used that word "seriously" on purpose, for in some mysterious way all true gaiety, whether its source be the charm of romance, or the spice of adventure, the truth of beauty, or the very soul of wisdom, is so to speak the serious part of life—worth while, worth treasuring.

You may ask what this has got to do with the Imperial Institute. Well, it all hangs together. All the best stories are the worth-while stories and their success depends on just two cardinal factors—they must tell about real things, for only realities can truly "reach" us, whether we are children or adults—and they must be told with something of the art which at once disarms and charms.

Cast your mind back to your childhood days—what were the lessons which you assimilated easily, quickly, durably? They were the lessons which, for one reason or another, you found absorbing. In other words there is one and only one golden key to successful education and that is interest. Inspire a child with an interest in his or her subject and you are already halfway through the lesson of the day.

Now that is our job at the Imperial Institute. We are out, not to teach lessons, but to tell stories; not to supplant but to supplement and aid the task of the school-teacher. We are out to inspire some of the questions which rise instinctively to the surface of childish minds—to inspire and at the same time to answer them. "What's this?" "What does it look like?" "How does it grow?" "What's it made of?" "Where does it come from?" "What can it be made into?" "What tools would you use?" "What other things can be joined to it?" "What's the good of it, anyway?" They're all childish questions, very natural and instinctive and healthy, and they lie at the base of all useful knowledge and all human progress.

As I say, we both provoke and answer such questions by means of the "stories" we tell in our Exhibition Galleries at the Imperial Institute. There are four great Galleries running east, west, south, and north; they are divided into Empire Courts and each Court contains photographs, dioramas, specimens and other exhibits which illustrate the life, scenery, and industries of some part of the Empire. The West Gallery, appropriately enough, is given up to Canada and the East Gallery to India, Burma and Ceylon; thence, via Malaya, Borneo, Hong-Kong, and Sarawak in the South Gallery to Australia, Fiji, New Zealand, the Falkland Islands, West Indies, and Newfoundland to Canada once more; while the North Gallery links Canada with the Mediterranean Colonies and Palestine, and so via West, South and East Africa, the Rhodesias, the Sudan and Somaliland back to Ceylon and the East Gallery.

In each of these Courts we tell the story of each country represented—travelogues to show its scenery; native arts and crafts; agriculture, forestry, the pastoral and mining industries; statuettes of the Empire Builders who discovered and cared for it and sometimes died for it. The industries we explain by means of "story" exhibits, that is to say composite exhibits, which start with specimens of the economic product concerned, photographs showing how it is grown or mined, how it is transported to the United Kingdom, what it looks like when it arrives, how it is finally processed here until it becomes an object of common everyday use. By this means we link up the raw material with the finished article, telling the story stage by stage; we link up the primary producer with the manufacturer; and we associate the product with the Empire country of its birth.

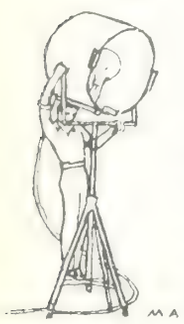
You may call this, if you like, visual instruction in the commercial geography of the Empire. It is only when we open our mental eyes and begin to take a real interest in the living world around us that we begin to expand and develop and, in short, to live, for growth is necessary to all life, whether in the domain of body, mind, or soul. If one cannot grow in quantity, one can at least grow in quality, in increasing health of body or of feelings, thought and will.

And now you may ask, "What has all this to do with the Film?" Well, the film plays a part, and a very important part, in this programme. The Institute has inherited from the Empire Marketing Board, by courtesy of the Postmaster-General, the magnificent collection of Empire films known as the E.F.L. These films it projects in its own cinema and also circulates to schools and to social, industrial and educational institutions throughout the United Kingdom. It also performs the same function, in the capacity of agent for the Postmaster-General, for the films produced by the G.P.O. These films describe, in vivid and arresting stories, the activities of the Postal, Telegraph, and Telephone Departments of His Majesty's Government; and by this means the same lesson is put across—the stimulation of childish curiosity and the satisfaction of that curiosity with the technique of a Government Service of vital social and domestic importance.

These are the means by which we tell the story of Empire Development, by means of the travelogues, and industrial exhibits in our Galleries and the Empire and G.P.O. films in our Cinema and Film Libraries. By these means the romance and adventure of the Empire are brought home to the 700,000 of the general public who visit our Galleries and Cinema every year, to say nothing of the school audiences which see the Empire and G.P.O. films to the number of nearly 5,000,000. It is on these activities that we base the claim of the Imperial Institute to be known and recognised as *the* Storyland of Empire.

# PEOPLE OF THE STUDIOS

## Denham



At a time when other companies are talking of economy, Korda is planning to outlay £600,000—his share in the deal if he and Sam Goldwyn exercise the option granted by Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and Charlie Chaplin, to buy up United Artists. As joint controller of the company, Korda hopes to find the foreign markets, the lack of which lay behind the recent financial crisis.

Meanwhile Herr Gunther Stapenhorst, co-producer of UFA's *Emil and the Detectives* and G.B.'s *The Great Barrier*, has joined London Films as co-producer with Korda. His first production will be *Red Shoes*, Merle Oberon's forthcoming picture of the Imperial Russian Ballet, under Ludwig Berger's direction. Miss Oberon is already versed in the art of ballet, having been instructed by Agnes DeMille, choreographer from the Ballet Rambert, for her part in *I, Claudius*.

Robert Donat last month had to give up his part in *South Riding* through illness and Ralph Richardson has taken it over. Edna Best, after a long absence from the screen, is back again as the leading lady. Ian Dalrymple, co-director of *Storm in a Tea Cup*, wrote the script from Winifred Holtby's novel of Yorkshire life, and Harry Stradling, photographer for *Knight Without Armour*, is cameraman. Victor Saville directs and produces.

On his return from New York, where he is planning the première of *Victoria The Great*, Herbert Wilcox puts *Nippy* into production—modern musical with Anna Neagle as a tea-shop girl. Ralph Reader, star and author of *The Gang Show*, is leading man. Scenario is being prepared by Marjorie Gaffney, script writer of *Evergreen* and *Head Over Heels*.

Marcel Hellman's new company, Excelsior Films, has signed on Jack Hulbert and Rex Harrison to make a musical comedy, *The Playboy*. Hellman is producing, and Thornton Freeland (who has just completed *Jericho* at Pinewood) is directing.

## Pinewood

A girl found dead at the foot of Beachy Head, a frantic search for the murderer across southern England—such is the plot of *A Shilling for Candles*, novel by Josephine Tey, which Alfred Hitchcock has in production. A plot after his own heart, Hitchcock has spent many weeks acclimatising himself to this new location. His last three films have taken him to Scotland, Switzerland, and the East End of London—this time he leads a chase through country pubs and police stations, courts and workhouses. Nova Pilbeam, who has been away from the studios for over a year, plays the spirited daughter of the chief constable (Percy Marmont). Leading man is Derick de Marney.

Jack Buchanan's big scoop for his newly-formed company is René Clair, whom he has signed to direct his picture with Adele Astaire. Clair's last production was *The Ghost Goes West*—since then he has published a book, but steered clear of the studios. Following immediately on *Smash and Grab*, the company's initial production, will be *The Sky's the Limit*, musical to be directed by Buchanan and Lee Garmes. Concurrently, *Sweet Devil* will take the floor, with Bobbie Howes and Jean Gillie, and directed by Tim Whelan.

## Elstree

Richard Bird, star of *Sensation* and *Bulldog Drummond at Bay*, has been chosen by Walter Mycroft to direct *The Terror*, an Edgar Wallace thriller. A shipping clerk before the war, Bird joined the Liverpool Repertory company in 1918. Stage production of *The Dominant Sex* gave him his chance; since then he has starred in several B.I.P. pictures, and produced in the West End, currently, "George and Margaret" and "The Constant Wife."

*Over She Goes*, successful Saville Theatre musical, is before the cameras with Stanley Lupino and Laddie Cliff—and Max Baer. Graham Cutts is the director.

## Teddington

Max Miller, quick-fire comedian, is back with First National for *Transatlantic Trouble*, with comedy director William Beaudine.

Max Miller started in a circus at the age of fourteen and ran away to India a year later, touring the whole country. Since then he has toured the Variety stages, writing his own songs, and winning his way to prominence with his inimitable patter. Started on the screen as the music publisher's agent in *The Good Companions*, since then making big money for Warners' with *Get Off My Foot* and *Educated Evans*.

The cast of *Transatlantic Trouble* also includes Buddy Baer and Joan Miller (the first artist to reach films by way of television).

## Welwyn

*Mutiny on the Elsinore*, Jack London's sea story, is being remade as a talkie by Argyle-British. A camera crew has spent a number of weeks aboard a windjammer getting atmosphere and background shots, and studio work begins with direction by Roy Lockwood, production by John Argyle, and supervision by Captain Walter Summers.

## Islington

As a country parson by day and a smuggler by night, George Arliss plays the name part in Dr. Syn, which Roy Neill is directing. After *Dr. Syn*, Arliss is reputed to be planning a Hollywood visit.

This time, Will Hay has Marcel Varnel as his director. The picture is *Oh, Mr. Porter*, the script writers are George Marriott Edgar and Val Guest, and the cameraman is Arthur Crabtree. Shooting has just begun.

## America

## M. G. M.

Among the productions promised at the annual sales convention last month were: Kipling's *Kim*, with Freddie Bartholomew and Robert Taylor; *Three Comrades*, Erich Maria Remarque's sequel to *All Quiet on the Western Front*, for Robert Taylor, Spencer Tracy and James Stewart; *Idiot's Delight*, Robert Sherwood's Pulitzer Prize play to star Clark Gable and Robert Taylor; *Return of the Thin Man*, with cast, writers and director as before; *The Great Canadian*, for Clark Gable; *Lola Montez*, historical-biography for Joan Crawford; *Merry Christmas*, scripted by Norman Krasna for Luise Rainer; *Rosalie* and *The Girl of the Golden West* for Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy; *Test Pilot* for Gable and Tracy; *Wedding Dress* for Robert Montgomery; and *Hats in the Air* for Eleanor Powell.

Metro also announce four new contracts. Eric Maschwitz (late variety director of the B.B.C.), Sidney Gilliatt and Lieut. Commander Frank Wead (author of *Ceiling Zero* and *China Clipper*) all join up as script writers, and Sir Cedric Hardwicke as a player.

## Radio

RKO has secured the productions of Disney for world distribution. The new cartoons are to have three-dimensional effects. Celluloid strips on which the characters are inked will be placed on different planes under the camera—formerly Disney placed his strips directly on top of one another. Some cartoon-lovers are not too happy about this change. They say the chief charm of the cartoon is the two dimensional unreality.

Studio work on Ginger Roger's *Vivacious Lady* having been held up for a month or two owing to James Stewart's illness, George Stevens, the director, has started *A Damsel in Distress*, romantic musical by humorist P. G. Wodehouse. This is Fred Astaire's first solo effort.

Meanwhile, Ginger Rogers teams with Katharine Hepburn in *Stage Door*, picture based on Broadway success by George S. Kaufman and Edna Ferber. Gregory La Cava is directing.

## Paramount

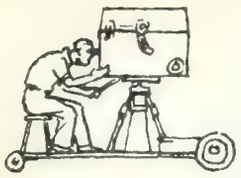
War between railways and Pennsylvania farmers in a struggle for control of the oil industry forms the background of *High, Wide, and Handsome*, Jerome Kern–Oscar Hammerstein musical with Irene Dunne in the lead. Rouben Mamoulian directed this picture.

Norman Krasna, author of *Fury*, the widely acclaimed story of American lynching, once more has German director Fritz Lang to interpret his latest screen play *You and Me*, with Sylvia Sidney in the lead. The same team worked together on *You only Live Once*.

After a year's illness, W. C. Fields makes a come-back in *That Man's Here Again*.

Ernst Lubitsch, who has just completed the Dietrich picture, *Angel*, soon starts work on *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*, with Claudette Colbert.

## United Artists



Films which come under Goldwyn's new technicolour plan will be *The Goldwyn Follies*, *The Real Glory* (story of Manilla during the American occupation) and *You Can Be Beautiful*, beauty-parlour story for Gary Cooper and Merle Oberon. Reaction to the announcement that *The Adventures of Marco Polo* was this company's last picture in black and white was hardly comparable to the industry's excitement in 1928 when it was clear that silent days were over. Indeed, the public remains strangely indifferent to the advent of colour.

Latest acquisition for *The Follies* is George Balanchine, former student of Diaghileff and choreographer for Nijinsky, who has been signed to appear in the film with his American ballet. Charles Kullman, Metropolitan Opera Company tenor, who was chosen by Toscanini for the leading rôle in *Die Meistersinger* at last year's Salzburg Festival, is also in the cast.

140,000 feet of background scenes for *Hurricane* were recently shot in the South Seas, nearly every native in the American group of the Samoan islands being used for the filming of religious and marital ceremonies, traditional feasts, and general native life. Navy and Government officials willingly co-operated.

No small achievement of Walter Wanger's, when he secured the screen rights of Sacha Guitry's *The Illusionist*. Guitry prefers to handle filming himself and rarely parts with his own material, but this time he has given way, and the chief rôle goes to his fellow countryman, Charles Boyer.

## Warner Bros.

Among the company's line-up for future production are film versions of eleven stage plays and seventeen novels.

Plays include *Tovarich*, with Claudette Colbert, Basil Rathbone and Charles Boyer; *White Horse Inn*, C. B. Cochran's musical; *Boy Meets Girl*, the Spewaks' Hollywood satire; *Yes, My Darling Daughter; Chalked Out*, drama of Sing Sing; and *On Your Toes*, with Ginger Rogers.

Pictures based on novels will include *The Story of San Michèle*, by Alex Münthe; *Emile Zola*, now in production with Paul Muni; *A Prayer for My Son*, by Hugh Walpole, and *The Great Garrick*, with Brian Aherne in the name part.

Tired of his independent film making and unable to find sufficient starring material, Jimmy Cagney returns to the Warner fold after his next Grand National picture, *Dynamite*. His break with Warners' was a result of his claim that they broke his $4,500 a week contract by compelling him to make more than four pictures a year, and by billing him below Pat O'Brien in *Ceiling Zero*.

## And Others . . . .

With *Wee Willie Winkie* clear of the cutting room, Shirley Temple is back in the studios again. Title this time is *Heidi*, and the location is the Swiss Alps. Supporting cast includes Arthur Treacher and Jean Hersholt.

* * *

Frances Marion, well-known script-writer, turns producer for *The Winning of the West*, to be made by Columbia. This is her first job in production. Other pictures planned by Columbia include George Kaufman and Moss Hart's *You Can't Take it with You* (this year's Pulitzer prize play), and *Chopin*, a historical biography.

* * *

Dick Merrill, the airman, has been signed by Pathé, and is starting *Atlantic Flight* immediately.

* * *

A new type of radio dramatisation, contrasting songs, music, drama, and comedy of fifty years ago, was presented over American radio a few weeks ago by Peter Godfrey, English author, dramatist and producer.

Godfrey, founder and director of the Gate Theatre in London, recently arrived in New York to become associated with the movie industry as a director. The dramatisation was his first work for American radio as author and director.

## Japan

The German-Italian-Japanese alliance for "cultural and educational co-operation in films," and for mutual action in suppressing pictures undesirable to any of the three Fascist countries, has encouraged Japan to raise an objection to *Yoshivara*, now in production at the Joinville studios, France. The grounds are that the film insults Japan and the Japanese.

Leading man Sessue Hayakawa, Hollywood star of the silent days, cabled a synopsis of the scenario by Maurice Dekobra as proof that no insult was included. Japan, however, still threatens boycott if production continues (which it does).

Japan's attempt at intervention before production is even completed is similar to Germany's threat to Hollywood some months ago. The Nazi Government warned Universal that if *The Road Back* was in any way unfavourable to Germany, it would be banned, and those participating blacklisted for all time.

## Germany

Nazi Government Film Prize for 1937 goes to State-Actor Emil Jannings for the Tobis picture *Der Herrscher* ("The Master"). At the gala meeting of the Reichkulturkammer, Dr. Goebbels, "Reich-Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda," declared that Jannings was the pioneer who had been opening new channels for German film art, and that his supreme achievements were well known to the entire world of culture.

An advisory council to deal with problems of an artistic or technical nature was elected at the last general meeting of Ufa. The council consists of two directors, three actors and a writer—among them Carl Froelich, Karl Ritter and Mathias Weidemann, vice-president of the Reichsfilmkammer.

## Austria

Dr. Miłkas, President of Austria, has bestowed a gold medal on Willy Forst, scenarist and director of *Burgtheater*. The honour is a result of Herr Forst's work in popularising Austrian films abroad.

After many postponements and collapse of production plans among Austrian film concerns, Ernest-Neubach Productions have *Millionaire* before the cameras, with Friedl Czepa and Wolfbach in the leading rôles. Karl Heinz Martins is directing, from a scenario by Hans Sassman. Oskar Schnirch is doing the camerawork.

## Switzerland

First studios to be built in the country are now under construction at Bâsle-Munchenstein. Tonfilm, the producing company, will receive a backing from the Government, and is planning to make five features a year, together with publicity and progaganda films.

## France

In *Les Perles de la Couronne*, Sacha Guitry's film tracing the history of seven valuable pearls in France, Italy and England, natives of the three countries play their respective parts and speak their respective languages. Guitry has made this experiment in an attempt to internationalise his film and to avoid "dubbing" (i.e. fitting foreign dialogue). Action covers four centuries—from Henry VIII (played by Welsh-born Lyn Harding) to the present day. Audiences from all three countries will be able to understand a third of the film—though the box-office draw of this method has yet to be proved.

All gangster films from England and the States that find their way into France, now have to undergo severe censorship. Reason: recent public enemy pictures have incited numerous crimes.

In spite of Japanese intervention (see *Japan*), production continues on *Yoshivara*, which Pathé is making at Joinville. Max Ophüls is directing.

GERMAINE DULAC, the French "avant-garde" director of *La Souriante Madame Boudet* and *La Coquille et le Clergyman*, has produced an instructional film, *La Cinema au Service de l'Histoire*, to prove that the newsreel can achieve greater artistic merit than the mere recording of current events. Cuttings of newsreels since 1903 have been used—royal meetings, diplomats, rising industries, military reviews—the political and economical milestones on the road to the war of 1914. Then the evolution of Bolshevism and Fascism, and finally the Ethiopian war, ending with a large interrogation mark—what is in store for this mad world?

Following this, Germaine Dulac shot a film attempting to tackle the problem of unemployment in France—blaming the vast number of unemployed on the small craftsmen, who should be taught, she points out, to accommodate themselves to new working measures.

Though still working for France Actualités, a newsreel company which she herself founded in 1932, but which has now been taken over by Agence Havas, she is planning a film on the ill-treatment of children.

With some of her socialist friends—among whom is Marceau Pivert—she is a leading figure in the film section of "Mai 36," a new cultural organisation founded by workmen and intellectuals of the Front Populaire.

# REVIEW OF REVIEWS

## Edited by H. E. Blyth

## *Review of the Month*

**FAREWELL AGAIN.** (Tim Whelan—London Films.)
Leslie Banks, Flora Robson, Robert Newton, Maire O'Neill, Robert Cochran.

The picture is based on a real-life incident, which occurred some months ago, when a British regiment, home from India on leave, was ordered out to the Near East again after six hours in dock at Southampton. The story is of the omnibus variety. It takes six different men from different ranks in the regiment, spots them from the crowd, makes them human, individual, likeable. It shows the people who are waiting for them at home, the meaning of those precise six hours in the history of their lifetime. For one minute it makes each man a god, a fate, a demon, an angel in his own little world of private passion. And then the bugle sounds; leave is over; back on that floating Grand Hotel, emblem of a blind but analgesic service, they are not men but troops again.

This is a good picture: a picture of real people. It is sad and funny, like life; stupid and obstinate and wistful. Birth comes, and death; jealousy and trust, and happy, meaningless commonplaces. Pick where you like through a long cast—colonel, captain, sergeant, orderly, doctor—I don't think you'll find one performance out of key, or one scene dishonestly manipulated.

Every member of the audience, of course, will have his special fancy. Mine is for Leslie Banks, whose quiet colonel, who finds he must leave his wife to die in England, is surely the finest and most sensitive thing this fine actor has done since first he began to make pictures. I liked enormously, too, Flora Robson's study of the sick wife; what an artist Miss Robson is, what a lovely, unmasked face she has! Is there one young screen actress in this country with her natural capacity for beauty? I doubt it.

Distributing honours for *Farewell Again* is rather like handing out the presents from a Christmas tree: everyone, from producer down to the smallest "bit" player, gets his package. But the biggest package of all goes to the man who first thought of bringing a bit of real life, for a change, into an important British movie. Except for Hitchcock's pictures, which are freaks in a curiously specialised subdivision of human excitement, the British cinema has told us next to nothing about British people. What do we really know about the waitress who serves our luncheon, the tube driver who takes us so blithely into the tunnel, the printer who sets up the type you are reading now?

There are many things, as I have not infrequently said, that are amiss with the British cinema, but one of them is certainly the shortage of films about British people. Not gallants of the French Revolution, Secret Service officers of White Russia, or Ruritanian princesses, but people—just people. Common people, busy people, jolly people, the sort of people Shakespeare singled out from the streets of Tudor London.

It is rather odd that the first big British picture to catch the full sense of English character should be this troopship story, which was produced by a German, directed by an American, and shot by a Chinese camera-man. Perhaps it is the cast—British from top to bottom—that has worked the miracle. Perhaps it is the sea, or the cloudy English skies; I don't know. But it's there—the magic—and you can't miss it, or shouldn't.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

"Farewell Again"

In a statement issued to *Film Weekly* a little time ago, Erich Pommer explained his future policy and programme. Realism was the keynote. Realism is the keynote of *Farewell Again*. It is a happy augury.

*Farewell Again* is based upon a common denominator of human experience.

Upon fact. The story of a troopship full of homesick soldiers on leave from India suddenly ordered back to the Near East. Men hungry for their wives, their children, their homes and their sweethearts, allowed only six hours of England.

*Farewell Again* succeeds in giving us a ship full of human beings. It does not invite inspection of its component parts. In this sense it is a good film.

On several occasions it is a very good film. One has that delightful feeling that one is eavesdropping on events, the hall-mark of film excellence. For this, one can overlook many synthetic hangovers. After all a film about the army presupposes a certain altitude; altruistic officers, service, cheers, and the rest of it. Once the realist producer has chosen the gambit of his general activity, he has got to accept certain limitations, courtesies, and rituals. These may hamper him. Necessary distortions creep in, but his sense of life will inevitably triumph. Thus, *Farewell Again* may contain elements of pathos or over-emphasis (the latter is the defect of naturalism occasionally *manqué*, a continental tendency to dwell, that does not quite ring true). It may end, according to formula, like a cross-word puzzle, hurriedly solved. But it has made its mark as an important film because the human purpose is paramount. Where there is tragedy, it is human tragedy, not a signal for any of those sickening stock abstractions which apparently appeal to certain members of the civilian public. For that reason alone, the film has an important sociological value. It sees straight.

Although a good film is not a film which invites inspection of its component parts, this film should be voluntarily inspected for an important reason. In *Farewell Again*, the small part player has come into his (her) own. In fact the greatest compliment one can pay Mr. Leslie Banks and Flora Robson, is that they are small part players as well. The director and cutter have smoothly distributed performances, without giving undue emphasis to a single one. For once, in a British film, and it is a relatively immense achievement, the complexities of film-making have been subordinated to the urgency of life. No exhibitionism, no snobbism, no "culture."

—Peter Brooke.

**STORM IN A TEACUP.** (Victor Saville and Ian Dalrymple—London Films.)

Sara Allgood, Vivien Leigh, Rex Harrison, Cecil Parker, Ursula Jeans, Eliot Makeham.

*Storm in a Teacup* is one of the most satisfactory pictures I ever remember. It is not, perhaps, a milestone in film history, not a classic of this, that or the other, but it is a good, plain, lovable and honest picture, and I should not be afraid of recommending it to anyone. The film is set in

Scotland during a municipal election. It shows how a pompous provost nearly loses his seat through the storm aroused over his treatment of a poor woman and her mongrel. The picture has a few faults, but a multitude of virtues. It is written with humour and good sense, directed as a film should be, untheatrically, and acted as if the players loved it. Vivien Leigh, I thought, touched just the right note as the provost's forthright daughter, and looks more and more like becoming England's No. 1 romantic film actress. Rex Harrison, in his second film, makes an exciting job of the journalist's part. Given the right direction, nothing, so far as I can see, can possibly stop him. I give Miss Leigh and Mr. Harrison as England's 1937 double for screen fame.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

Hand on heart, I promise you this is the most intelligently amusing comedy made in England for years. It is positively un-British in its independence of slapstick, absurdity, or characters with "comedian" written in large, invisible letters on their brows. Maybe the best thing of all about the picture is the sparkling spirit which pervades it. The acting is good and all the people are real and understandable, even the inflated ass of a provost, skilfully played by Cecil Parker. Rex Harrison, the best handler of romantic comedy we have in this country, Vivien Leigh, Sara Allgood, Scruffy the dog, and Eliot Makeham as a judge, are contributors to a smooth, chuckling entertainment for which Victor Saville, as director and producer, takes the best-earned bow of this year's British films.

—Stephen Watts, *The Sunday Express*

*Critical Summary.*

In a month with more starred films than usual in our list it is pleasant indeed to place two English pictures at the top. *Farewell Again* and *Storm in a Teacup* both succeed in bringing the ordinary, everyday people of this country to the screen and that is all too rare a virtue in our studios.

**A STAR IS BORN.** (William A. Wellman—Selznick International.)
Janet Gaynor, Fredric March, Adolphe Menjou.

This is very simply a little sketch—romantic, too—of success in Hollywood. It's the story of a marriage of two stars—one on the upgrade, the other sinking fast into oblivion. Such things, I believe, do happen in the Western colony. It has been Fredric March's good fortune to play the husband's rôle, and never has he done anything better. Bitterness is necessary, and a kind of silent defeat, or something of that sort, and he does this so well that even the suicide doesn't seem to require explanation. You can believe in it, which isn't usual in movie suicides. It seems reasonable even in spite of the Technicolour sunset as a background. Then there's a funeral scene which should be noted, enriched by a vicious note as the crowding fans break down the self-control of the widowed star. A nice touch. There are many nice touches. And some of them, I might add, are contributed by Adolphe Menjou, as a producer who seems to be always in his right mind.

—John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

*A Star is Born* is a Hollywood story of, by and for its people. It has the usual preface, attesting to the fictional quality of the characters and incidents depicted, but it is none the less the most accurate mirror ever held before the glittering, tinselled, trivial, generous, cruel and ecstatic world that is Hollywood. That, in itself, guarantees its dramatic interest, for there is no place on this twentieth-century earth more fascinating—not even that enchanting make-believe republic which James Hilton called Shangri-La. There is a vibrance and understanding in its writing, a feeling for telling detail and a sympathy for the people it touches. It is not a maudlin picture—not nearly so heroic, let us say, as its dramatic corollary, *Stage Door*. Janet Gaynor's movie-struck Esther Blodgett is not a caricature; Fredric March's waning Norman Maine is not an outrageous "ham"; Adolphe Menjou's Oliver Niles (of Oliver Niles Productions) is no more—and no less—human than many producers are. They are honest, normal, well-intentioned folk; different, of course, for Hollywood would make them so; but we can believe in them and understand them and be moved by their tragedy. Conviction can bring any formula to life.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

*Critical Summary.*

Film stories of life back stage, on Broadway and 42nd Street, are legion, yet only very rarely does Hollywood make a film about itself. Its publicity departments and not its directors are responsible for telling us what happens on and off the set. Perhaps *Blonde Bombshell*, that whirlwind satire, rapped too many knuckles in the film colony, and it was then tactfully decided to avoid films about film stars. So *A Star is Born* is notable, and in more ways than one, for it also provides an exception to the rule that they never come back. *Seventh Heaven* made Janet Gaynor a world-famous star, but in recent years heads have been shaken over her future. Now it seems as if a star is re-born.

## W.F.N. Selection

| | |
|---|---|
| *Farewell Again* | * * |
| *Storm in a Teacup* | * * |
| *You Only Live Once* | * |
| *The Last of Mrs. Cheyney* | * |
| *Captains Courageous* | * |
| *Shall We Dance?* | * |

### *Other Films Covered in this Issue*

*A Star is Born*

*Maytime*

*Seventh Heaven*

*Moonlight Sonata*

*The Trooping of the Colour*

*Der Ammenkoenig*

*The Price of Ignorance*

No.

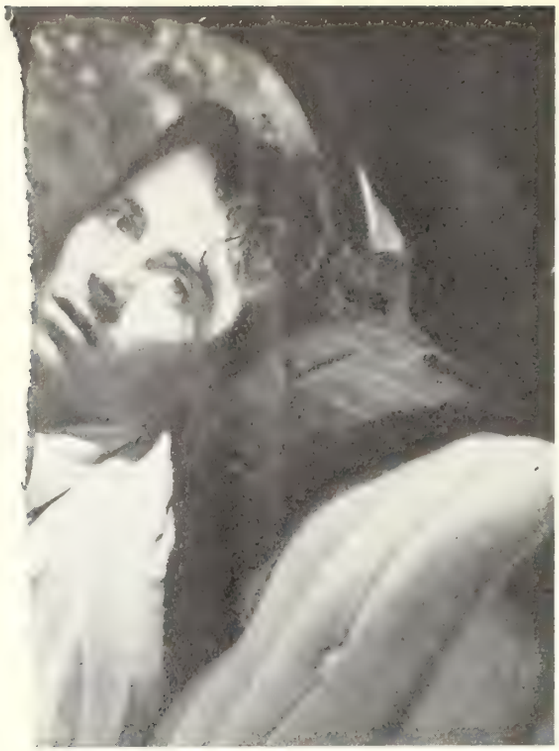
**SHALL WE DANCE?** (Mark Sandrich—RKO.)
Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers, Harriet Hoctor, Edward Everett Horton, Eric Blore.

Comical complications make up the story of *Shall We Dance?* but there is much more to this picture than plot. There is a marvellous solo dance by Fred Astaire in the glorified engine room of a ship. Machinery marks changes in rhythm to provide Fred Astaire with one of the cleverest dances of his career. Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire offer a delightful dance on roller skates, and Ginger Rogers gives an irresistible performance. On her superlative work in *Shall We Dance?* one must doubt whether there is a more attractive personality in pictures to-day. Edward Everett Horton adds a deliciously dithering background in the part of manager to the ballet dancer and Eric Blore has one of the best moments in the film when he is arrested and seeks to let his friends know that he is held in Susquehannah Street police station. Again and again we find American films, sometimes of inferior merit and sometimes of as great merit as *Shall We Dance?* made more attractive by incidents added to a plot in harmony with its theme and the people in it. This inventiveness of American film writers gives to their work an exhilaration while we are watching their films and something most pleasurable to remember.

—Seton Margrave, *The Daily Mail*

Am I growing blasé, or is the Astaire-Rogers brand of entertainment wearing a little thin? If you care to see another long-range sex duel, with Miss Rogers pouting prettily and Mr. Astaire smiling his twisted smile like a wounded but still nonchalant faun, then this is your picture. Despite some songs that may or may not become the rage (I wouldn't know), and some extremely agile and graceful dancing, I couldn't learn to care. Eric Blore and Edward Everett Horton assist.

—Campbell Dixon, *The Daily Telegraph*



. . . . . Robert Z. Leonard— Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
Jeanette MacDonald, Nelson Eddy, John Barrymore.

Before going into the whys and the wherefores, dull things at best, let this enthusiastic bulletin be entered into the departmental record: *Maytime* is the most entrancing operetta the screen has given us. It establishes Jeanette MacDonald as the possessor of the cinema's loveliest voice—this with all deference to the probably superior off-screen voices of Lily Pons, Grace Moore and Gladys Swarthout—and it affirms Nelson Eddy's pre-eminence among the baritones of filmdom. The screen can do no wrong while these two are singing; when, in addition, it places a splendid production behind them, the result approaches perfection. *Maytime* does just that.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

A sugary conception notable mainly for the singing of Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. It is a vague mixture of *Bitter Sweet* and *Smilin' Through*, wholly obvious in conception and none too convincing in characterisation or situation.

Directly one sees Jeanette MacDonald appear on the screen as an old woman, one realises that there is going to be a lot of sentimental reminiscences.

The settings are exceedingly picturesque, and the operatic excerpts well staged. Technically, the picture reaches a very high standard.

—Lionel Collier, *Picturegoer*

**SEVENTH HEAVEN.** (Henry King—20th Century-Fox.)
Simone Simon, James Stewart, Jean Hersholt.

Both Miss Simone Simon and Mr. James Stewart have the power to give sincerity to the most obvious and most abused scenes of grief, to the flagrantly manufactured pathos of their parts. Once the tribute has been paid there is little else which need concern us. The film is so incredibly sentimental that even the two or three moments of genuine pathos seem to be unreal. It begins with a scene in a Paris sewer, passes through the trials of war, plays continuously on a note of religiosity which makes one shudder, and winds up in much the same ecstasy of spirit as that in which a child might witness a transformation scene at a Drury Lane pantomime. The Diane of Miss Simone is genuinely child-like, and Mr. Stewart, as the conventionally romantic Chico, manages to combine sincerity with an agreeable touch of egotism, continually expressed in his declaration that he is a very remarkable fellow. Indeed, both Mr. Stewart and Miss Simon are remarkable, at least in this film, for without them this numerical order of heaven might never have been counted. —*The Times*

In a nasty sentimental way this is really a pro-war picture, depending on an idealisation of superstition and spirituality and a false tenderness toward simple working folk to stir up a sympathy toward the activities in which they participate. And they participate in war. However, this is kept pretty much in the background; I doubt whether it will have a poisonous effect. As entertainment, the film is passable hokum. It is put over by such steady character-actors as Victor Kilian, John Qualen, and J. Edward Bromberg. Gregory Ratoff shouts his head off in one sequence, and Simone Simon and James Stewart are the stars of this remade "film classic."

—Meyer Levin, *Esquire*

**THE LAST OF MRS. CHEYNEY.** (Richard Boleslawski—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
Joan Crawford, Robert Montgomery, William Powell, Nigel Bruce, Frank Morgan, Benita Hume.

Fay Cheyney, the last of whom can again be seen, was a lady, although her past was not only shady but positively vermilion. She was not a rogue, this roguish Mrs. Cheyney: Lonsdale knew far too much for that. Under her fingerprint-proofed exterior she had a heart of gold, loaned out most of the time to a playboy member of the aristocracy. Joan Crawford, whose improvement as an actress well justifies the lion in any of his contemporary roars, plays Cheyney with the right indifference. It is a smart portrait, in pert Peter Arno fashion. Montgomery's Arthur is equally good. Powell's burglar-butler is not Powell at his best : he thrives only on the winning side. The actual background, of lofty English homes, is rapturously wrong in many cases. Having made an exceedingly amusing film, it would perhaps be a good idea if Metro now let it be known that we really have seen the last of Mrs. Cheyney.

—Connery Chappell, *The Sunday Dispatch*

This picture has been done before in a much better way by far more suitable performers and under more skilful direction. As a réchauffé of what in its original form was a neat bit of sophisticated Lonsdale comedy it has grown tiresome and fantastic. Joan Crawford is about as little suggestive of a female Raffles as she is of a society mannequin. William Powell should have exchanged parts with Robert Montgomery, and the crowd of society wrong-uns are each and all thoroughly unconvincing. We enjoy the inanities of Frank Morgan and the fatuousness of Nigel Bruce, but the clumsiness and ineptitude of the direction are irritating.

—Sydney W. Carroll, *The Sunday Times*

**YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE.** (Fritz Lang—Walter Wanger, United Artists.) Sylvia Sidney, Henry Fonda.

With her wonderful eyes ready to brim over with tears, Sylvia Sidney again plays a heroine who sticks to her man throughout a cruel fate which ends in tragedy. As a Shaw character says, anyone with the feelings of a lady meets her man on his prison discharge. Miss Sidney and Henry Fonda play with all the emotion possible (which is a good deal) and the picture is produced with all the hallmarks of a tale of monstrous injustice —the hounding of an ex-convict who tries to Go Straight. Unfortunately, I could not see this. The sympathy asked for is so much sloppy bunk. However, the suspense is genuinely thrilling, expecially the jail escape, and there is the usual meeting behind prison bars, with lighting effects, as well as some moments of real beauty. Emotionally and dramatically this is a thrilling picture, so long as you have not time to worry about its logic.

—P. L. Mannock, *The Daily Herald*

Something that has been received at various sources as a social indictment is on view under the title *You Only Live Once*. I couldn't find any conscious blame-laying in the picture. As a matter of fact, I couldn't find anything at all that detracted from a good story well told. True, it's about a three-time convict who is released from prison with the warning "Go straight, or you're done for." And he has about as much chance of going straight, at least in *this* picture, as a bit of gossip. What happens to him after his release is a series of melodramatic coincidences that have been so excitingly pieced together that I willingly smothered my incredulity.

—Katharine Best, *Stage*

It is my opinion that once the audience's sympathy is aroused, a character may enact any crime, however fundamentally repellent, without losing the audience's respect. The murder committed by Fonda in my film's dénouement is so outrageous, so shocking, that I admit we were tempted to change the story. But we realised that this would have weakened our theme considerably, so we chose another course. We justified his crime. To do it, we had to present him, in the early sequences, as a victim of circumstances, as a boy helpless and afraid, caught in the law's mesh, convicted for a murder of which he was innocent.

—Fritz Lang

**CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS.** (Victor Fleming—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
Spencer Tracy, Freddie Bartholomew, Lionel Barrymore, Melvyn Douglas,

*Captains Courageous*, based on Kipling's story, is full of the sound of the sea and the beauty of sail, of the humours and tragedies of sailormen. I can think of no previous film in which the sea setting has been made with more beauty—and more realism. The Gloucester fishing schooners of the hard-bitten and courageous captains are as graceful as yachts, and when they crowd on canvas and race homewards with the season's catch they rouse the Masefield and the Conrad that sleeps in all rough islanders. There is only one woman character in this film, and she is brought in merely to cook an unimportant meal. It is a man's picture and a boy's picture, and yet she will have a steel-walled heart who does not cry—and cry steadily—when she sees it. The theme is intensely sentimental. Lionel Barrymore is a lively, likeable skipper, full of strange oaths and insults, but the film belongs to Freddie—a performance of real talent—and to Tracy as the boisterous, big-hearted, heroic Portuguese. Compare this with his part in *Fury* and you realise Tracy's claim to being one of the three best actors in Hollywood.

—Ian Coster, *The Evening Standard*

The story, of course, is of the change in a boy's outlook when he is thrown from luxury into the company of happy, rough, hard-working fishermen. It is a very beautiful tale, artistically told, with all the things—dialogue, situations and scenery—that take possession of an audience and swing their emotions at will. The sea scenes are emotionally beautiful. They mesmerise the eye and hypnotise one's senses. And the acting is grand. Freddie Bartholomew has never done better work. The subtle shades he gets into his acting are really surprising. I never suspected he was such an artist. The beginning is protracted, and does not indicate the fine things to come. Then, at the end, there are some scenes that are superfluous. The director puts a lump in your throat so thoroughly that he nearly chokes you.

—Richard Haestier, *The Star*

*Critical Summary.*

How many child stars can really act? This is a problem of considerable interest. Recently Mickey Rooney, in *The Devil Takes the Count*, has proved conclusively that he can. Of Freddie Bartholomew, Graham Greene wrote not long ago: "He never begins to act. He never has begun as far as I know." *Captains Courageous* would now seem to disprove this.

**MOONLIGHT SONATA.** (Lothar Mendes—Pall Mall Productions.)
Paderewski, Marie Tempest, Charles Farrell, Barbara Greene, Eric Portman.

If ever there was a one-man picture it is this. The supreme virtuoso begins to play as the curtain rises; he is playing at the close; and whenever he is not playing, there is the most negligible of plots.

But when he plays!

It seemed to me, as I watched *Moonlight Sonata*, that Paderewski has all the old force, all the old tenderness, all the old rapture in understanding, and whenever he has to speak there is something touching, and beautiful in his dignity. For the rest I fear I can say little. Marie Tempest is, as ever, mistress of whatever scene she plays, with a sense of timing that should be a lesson for all; but there is nothing to it, and, believing not a whit in Mario the adventurer (and even less in his wardrobe), we are not interested in the adventure.

—E. V. L., *Punch*

We have one of the greatest of all pianists playing a Chopin Polonaise, the Liszt Hungarian Rhapsody No. 2, the Moonlight Sonata, and his own Minuet in G, and the camera bringing those rare sensitive hands and marvellously expressive face closer to our acquaintance than would be possible in any concert hall. Paderewski may be a distant and austere figure on the concert platform: here he is lovably human. While the fire of his genius still sustains him and the years have added only dignity to his figure, the cinema has found him and robbed mortality of some of its worst spoils. Actually the story is slight in substance, and far from appealing enough in significance. It is a reconstruction of a romance in which the Moonlight Sonata, played by Paderewski, has woven its influence into young people's lives in successive generations. *Moonlight Sonata* seemed to me to fall short of perfection in the manner of its end. It is much overdone in sentimentality. But of Paderewski and Miss Tempest there could not be too much.

—*The Birmingham Mail*

*Critical Summary.*

The feebleness of this story was condemned by almost every critic, yet one and all found Paderewski magnificent. Time without number it is the story and dialogue writers in English films who let the production down. It is these people, more than any others, who seem consistently incapable of pulling their weight.

**THE TROOPING OF THE COLOUR.** (Pathé Newsreel on Dufaycolor.)

The production of this reel of 850 feet is something of a marker in the history of newsreel. Not because of subject or quality, but because for the first time a successful colour newsreel has been produced in a commercially feasible manner.

Unlike some other systems in use, the negative of Dufaycolor can be duplicated, an essential in practical newsreel work, and any number of prints can be taken off. So special cameras or projectors or even very complicated processing is needed.

The quality of the photography is not consistent, some of it appears crude, but in the main the colour is realistic and adds immeasurably to the spectacle. The reel was edited by Fred Watts and the commentary spoken by Roy de Groot. The camera work was done by Jock Gemmell (from the main Horseguards' position), Arthur Farmer (responsible for the close-ups of the king), Charles Martin and Kenneth Gordon (from the Horseguards').

The Dufay system of colour photography is one of the cinema's oldest—but recently it has been improved, and its parent company enlarged under the new banner of Dufay-Chromex. From the newsreel point of view, Dufay has the enormous advantage over other systems that it combines the best modern standard of colour definition, with processing at almost the speed of black and white. Pathé linked up with Dufay to film the Coronation and again, a few days later, the Naval Review. Both stories were to a certain extent marred by extremely bad light, and by inexperienced camera work. The third attempt in the Trooping of the Colour, however, shows none of the previous blemishes.

—P. F.

## *Foreign Films*

**DER AMMENKOENIG.** (Hans Steinhoff—German.)
Richard Romanowsky, Kathe Gold, Gustav Knuth, Marie-luise Claudius, Fita Benkhoff.

This film, directed by Herr Hans Steinhoff, is described as "a rollicking jest against prudery and moral-hypocrisy." It is actually an advertisement for the procreation of many children. No doubt for this purpose prudery must be to a certain extent overcome, and in the film, which is set in the eighteenth century, the machinations of a Minister of Morality are set at naught and a thoroughly hearty, painstaking, and German eroticism is triumphant. A feeble and spectacled Margrave, a thorough milksop, and his absurdly artificial Court are reformed into fertility and manliness by the influence of an incredibly sturdy blacksmith, the "king of the nurses," who has been chosen by a guild of nursemaids to foster and protect them. The ethics of the film appear to be thoroughly muddled, and its propaganda is hardly improved by being laboriously disguised as gay and frolicsome humour. But the settings are charming, whether in the scenes of peasant life, the processions and festivals in the country, or in the scenes at Court, with fantastically rococo interiors, or beautiful views of eighteenth-century parks and gardens. —*The Times*

**THE PRICE OF IGNORANCE.** (Swiss.)

In any really civilised community, films like this would be unnecessary. The facts of sexual diseases would be made part of the knowledge of adolescents as a matter of course. It is unsatisfactory that training in social hygiene should have to be mixed up with emotional entertainment.

Nevertheless, this film is in many ways far superior to others of its type.

There is little false prudery; the sickening facts are not shirked (and some of the shots of syphilitic children are sickening enough); and the film has the courage to be constructive.

The basis of the film is Swiss, and much of it is extremely interesting as an essay in film construction. The direction and cutting are often imaginative. The stories of individuals—a young medical student who fears that he may have been infected, and a mechanic whose infection is transmitted to his baby—are related to the daily routine of the inhabitants of a city about their work and their relaxation. The method derives from the "symphonic" experiments of Ruttman in "Berlin."

—Frank Evans, *The Newcastle Evening Chronicle*

# *Music Can Provide Only Interior Rhythm says Alberto Cavalcanti*

## In an address given at the Second International Congress of Music in Florence

DURING the past few years, the purely musical film has reached such perfection that one is bound to pay tribute to the Americans for this, at least. Such precious morsels as the park scene in *Born to Dance*, with Eleanor Powell, must be treated with respect.

To what extent such achievements result from the skilful use of the best elements of the theatre, treated cinematographically, by film-technicians, I cannot say.

In Europe why do we not approach the musical film from a different angle? I suggest this is well worth consideration.

Of one thing I am convinced—the music in other films, both in America and elsewhere is, as a rule, mediocre.

When the scenarists see that there is too much dialogue, they think up a nondescript, uneventful scene, insert in the sound column the word "music," and say to themselves, "The musician will settle that." (So far, well-written scenarios with music appropriately added have been an exception.)

Then, after the film has been edited, it may happen that the action at such and such a point is too slow. Immediately comes the decision, "We'll have to put in some music." Yes, and once more, "The musician will settle that."

It would be much easier, however, to choose a musician to collaborate with the scenarist and keep in mind the essential conception of the film. His work instead of being merely a stop-gap, would then have real value, and besides, would help to make the whole consistent.

According to this ideal, the music should be selected to suit the pictures; but, for the moment at least, we mustn't ask too much of the producers.

### Director *v.* Musician

*A film is a collective work*. One cannot insist too often on this, especially where the directors are concerned.

In order to analyse the exact relationship between the director and the musician, one must admit that usually the chief ambition of the director is to establish himself, at any cost, as an artist. This often results in a ridiculous tyranny.

Let us consider the survivors in the department of music.

Among the directors are individuals who profess to be connoisseurs of that art. Heaven protect us! They have such dangerously personal ideas on the subject—which, unfortunately, musicians will never be able to express.

It is my opinion that they are responsible for the exact synchronism which musicians have just succeeded in missing. If I may be permitted a digression—I must confess that I am a sworn enemy of synchronism. It has been the main cause of the slow development of the real sound-film, and I am delighted to find that synchronism, not only of music, but also of speech and noise, is receiving less and less attention to-day. I could give you innumerable examples, but the most typical is the *March of Time*, where lively commentary and a rather noisy musical accompaniment lend undeniable colour to indifferent pictures.

I was about to accuse the directors with musical pretensions, of having invented those unpalatable interludes, where every step and movement is accompanied with a clashing of cymbals or of drums.

The outside rhythm of a film must be created by the editing. Music can provide only interior rhythm.

**Darius Milhaud**

But the directors have had no difficulty in finding other fads to take the place of synchronism, and they are every bit as tiresome. The musical setting, or rather atmosphere, has become a necessity. For them it is the solution of all the problems relating to sound in the film.

In one film, lately, there was a night sequence, showing a cab in the streets of a sleeping town. The noise of the horseshoes and their echo (which had been recorded elsewhere) made the perfect accompaniment for the scene. The musician realised it at once, but the director had "ideas." He wanted to have music, and he demanded it in such a way that the musician was forced to write it. There is little need to add that it went into the film in spite of the composer's wishes to the contrary, and the fact that the director came to the conclusion that it wasn't exactly all that he had imagined.

Once again—had the musician worked in conjunction with the film from the start, there would have been no argument, but an added motive.

In an article entitled "Music for Films," which appeared in a new Paris paper, *Cinematographe*, Jean Wiener says:

"Every part must contribute to the whole, and not mar its effect but help to make it acceptable to the public. Modesty is the most indispensable virtue so far as film musicians are concerned."

"One can trust the composer if his music is not 'heard' but is linked so closely with the whole that it cannot be detached."

"There ought to be interruptions, or 'breathing spaces,' in the music throughout the film; and one must be aware neither of its starting nor of its finishing. It has to *grow* from the noise of a door, for example, or a sob, or laughter, and fade with an expression for which it has been the medium, with a pause in the script, as part of a balanced theme, or hidden behind something more realistic. One gets the impression only too often, on the introduction of music, that the conductor has come along with his baton and is standing there leading his orchestra. This is so absurd, in the midst of dramatic emotions, that one consigns music and everything connected with it to the devil."

It is highly commendable on the part of Jean Wiener to throw all the responsibility on the musician. However, I think the directors ought to share the blame for the wrong use of music in films.

Of course that applies only to *some* directors. It is time I said a word on behalf of my friends who admit as I do, that they know nothing about music. They are simply good managers in the workroom of the studio; yet they often make the best films. What is their impresson of most of the musicians with whom they have "tried" to work? It is that concert music is the only kind that matters to them. Everything else, particularly the film, is simply a means to a commercial end.

They have scarcely noticed that if the microphone was successfully ignored during the first years of its existence, by concerts or the opera, it was none the less a sign of a new era. They scorned the young people who wished to avoid so-called "pure" forms of music, and they failed to realise that music, in post-war days, had to escape from professedly intellectual audiences and try to find real support with a wider public. They didn't understand that film and radio are essentially inventions catering to the needs of the masses at the present day; that it is not technique that matters, but conception.

### "Moral" limitations

We all know that even now too little is written for the films, the radio, and "the mob"; and too much for concerts and the elite.

It was the general belief, at one time, that the microphone was capable of transmitting only certain things. Nonsense!

It has made such rapid progress that everything can be broadcast. The microphone's limitations are *moral* ones; and one can easily forget the microphone if one understands the public that is at the back of it.

Another point is that my colleagues and I have met very few musicians who realise how often film music has to be cut.

# MUSIC

## *Wagner, Verdi and the Film*
## *by Darius Milhaud*

(*From the Italian Magazine 'Cinema'*).

When the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino did me the honour of inviting me to speak at the Congresso di Musica and suggested the argument "The Wagnerian solution for the lyric drama; is it also valid for the Cinema?", I must confess that I was on the point of asking for a different subject. But I accepted.

No one more than I recognises the colossal importance of Wagnerian Opera. Equally no one could be more grateful than I to have been born late enough to avoid the prevalent fashion, and to have come into the world at a time when the giant's influence was dying—an influence which very nearly compromised and suffocated the entire musical world.

1902, the year of the first performance of Pelleas, at last marked the birth of a free epoch, and little by little the voices which had remained independent, but which had been shouted down by the Wagnerian thunder, could begin to make themselves heard, to diffuse their finer vibrations —the voice of Gounod, the voice of Verdi. . . .

But to return to the theme. "Did Wagner definitely give a 'solution' to the lyrical drama?" I do not think so. First of all "solution" would seem defructification, a blind alley. And music is always on the move. It cannot crystallise.

I am the last person to adopt this Wagnerian premise, and then apply it to music for the cinema. The ideals of the "Master of Bayreuth" have always antagonised me. My *coeur de Provencal* has always been suffocated by the rhetoric, which guided this particular type of philosophical-cum-musical pathos. But what finally annoys me is the fact that this so-called solution given by Wagner to lyrical drama (based on the *leit-motif* which is attached to a character or concept) is a solution of the elementary school. Isn't it a little childish to precede the entrance of a character by his theme? Doesn't the obvious facility of this procedure finish by seeming very cheap?

### Cater for the Masses

Of course it would be possible to connect this childish simplicity with cinema music. Directly the sound film had been invented, it sought to attract the public, to cater for the masses in obvious and popular forms. The *leit-motif* was the evident formula. It has been exploited to limits which would have fulfilled Wagner's wildest dreams.

Entire films were constructed upon a single theme, in the same way that a scenario would be drafted about the personality of one star. This single theme was manipulated, twisted and untwisted in a welter of sickly orchestrations, insinuating, variating, all of them dripping with insipidity. It hammered on the heads of the audience, imprisoned them, weakened them. When the film was over, the theme, evaporated from the skin, echoed in the ears like the memory of an orgy, with a feeling of sickening nausea. Then that was not all. This clinging theme left the frame of its picture and spread abroad into the remotest hamlets, to city, suburbs, to town villas, in short to every corner of the earth, thanks to gramophone and radio.

Luckily this state of affairs has not continued indefinitely. The procedure has been considered unprofitable. The cinema, in this musical straitjacket, risked finding itself deprived of any note of the unexpected, of any possibility of imagination. And, almost directly one mentions unexpectedness or imagination, one is opposed to the Wagnerian standpoint. So much the better. No liberation could be more healthy.

I was thinking about all this the other evening, listening to the admirable performance of *Othello* presented by the Maggio Musicale Fiorentino. What a lesson! Nothing constrained, nothing foreseen. Everything alive, full of enthusiasm. A constant revitalisation of the melody, sustained by an energetic, immensely powerful sense of drama. This I felt with ever-growing certainty, to be the genuine solution of lyrical drama. Because this ideal adapted itself to every system, because it was life itself. The great Verdi will triumph over Wagner in posterity.

And thinking of the speech which I had been invited to make for the Congresso, I understood why I had hesitated. It is not Wagner who could offer a solution to the music of the cinema. Verdi alone could do that, because his music moved with that sense of liberty indispensable to any dramatic expression.

(*Translation by Peter Brooke*)

## *Alberto Cavalcanti (contd.)*

We have met very few musicians, too, who have understood that 90 per cent of film music must be recorded pianissimo. How often the objection is raised, "But you can't hear *my music* any more!" (You know, however, that there is a kind of music that one hears quite well, even though it is scarcely perceptible). And when music has been made for a film, don't you think it ought no longer to be "my music" but "the music of the film"?

The queer thing is that it is not the best musicians who give us the most trouble.

I have worked with many whose collaboration has been not only a pleasure but a success; Maurice Jaubert, for example, and the young, talented, English musician, Benjamin Britten. I should like too to do homage to others—all those with whom I hope to have the honour of working one day. And in this respect I shall mention only one name, that of Darius Milhaud, who knew so well, even before the advent of the sound film, the kind of music that was necessary for the screen.

Sound, apart from speech and music, has become an element of the first importance in the film—with the achievement of perfection in the microphone and the innumerable possibilities it offers.

We all know that there is a *picture* technique—with immense possibilities, manipulation of the camera, editing, etc.—but in my opinion, the parallel technique of real sound has been neglected.

Sounds may be recorded; they have rhythm and they are as necessary in a film as dialogue, music and pictures. Few directors are aware of this. Few musicians are interested.

In conclusion, it ought to be understood that film music has to be written in the first place, for the film and especially for an audience which is only vaguely related to a concert audience—in numbers and in mentality.

The musician must understand, as well as the director, that a film is a collective work in which they form only two parts of the intricate machinery. When they do at last understand, things will be infinitely easier. The hoped-for results will be achieved; sound will be on the right road to development, and the relationship of one branch of film to another will be correctly established.

## Copyright on Records

Two or three years ago, the gramophone companies won a law case based upon their claim that the recording of a piece of music on a gramophone disc created a copyright in the disc quite distinct from the composer's copyright in the music.

Immediately following this success, they notified the cinema exhibitors that in future gramophone discs would not be allowed to be used in cinemas for incidental music unless the exhibitors first obtained a licence.

The Cinema Exhibitors' Association objected on principle to taking out this new licence. Exhibitors already paid a fee to the Performing Rights Society.

The Association discovered a company that was prepared to sell exhibitors' gramophone discs without charging a fee for public performance; and declined to negotiate with the gramophone group.

The chief fear was, that having once "got its teeth" into the industry, the gramophone companies would raise their fees year after year.

By way of answer, the Group last year issued a scale of fees, and announced their willingness to 'fix' these for ten years.

But the C.E.A. still maintained its attitude of 'Nothing doing.'

Now the C.E.A. has ended its contract with the company that was providing free-use discs, and has accepted the agreement with the gramophone group.

In coming to agreement with the group, they have announced as a reason 'the terms being now satisfactory.'

The terms 'now satisfactory' are precisely the same scale as that offered by the Group a year ago.

There is, however, one conditional variation.

Non-members of the C.E.A. have to pay the full scale. Members of the C.E.A. get a 33⅓ per cent discount!

Considering that the gramophone group was never at war with non-members of the C.E.A., many of whom supported the group at a time when the C.E.A. would have nothing to do with them, this 33⅓ per cent special favour seems to be bestowed on the wrong people.

But that's the way of the world.

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# NEWSREEL RUSHES *by the Commentator*

## Historic Mistakes

"The newsreel . . . is rushing breathlessly to oblivion." Thus John Grierson, in a previous issue of *W.F.N.*, expressed the thoughts of a vast army of filmgoers. World events of the past year seem to have conspired to show up the British newsreels at their most cowardly, most incompetent. Almost each month has seen another nail driven home into the newsreel coffin, with a resounding "wham." A few recent blows: the failure of the reels to face the issue of the year's labour disturbances, i.e. the sit-down strike in France and the U.S., and the London bus strike —their failure to please renter, exhibitor or public over the Coronation—above all, their boycott of the century's most amazing story—the transmutation of King Edward VIII into the Duke of Windsor.

When the abdication so scared the newsreels, that their comments resembled the squeakings of frightened rabbits, it may well have been said that the coffin's brass handles were being screwed on. Many have felt that the past month has seen the fitting of the lid—among them, Mr. Ernest Fredman, Editor of one of the leading trade sheets *The Daily Film Renter*.

Mr. Fredman's paper is exclusively interested in topics that interest the exhibitors. He seldom discusses newsreel policy, because the newsreels rarely earn better than bottom place in a cinema programme (Feature 1st, Disney 2nd, etc.). But on 8th June, in his "Daily" gossip column, Mr. Fredman wrote: "Story . . . of the newsreels not putting out any pictures of the Duke of Windsor's wedding—has occasioned considerable comment . . . I feel the newsreel people have made a lamentable mistake . . . the news units have practically surrendered their birthright . . . . After this, it's . . . obvious that they'll be so scared of including pictures of any contentious personality, that there's a distinct danger of the reels becoming a picture gallery for the opening of bridges and launching of battleships. . . ."

That outburst—from so unexpected a quarter —reflects the temper of the public, through the magnifying mirror of the trade. How did the newsreels come to make what may well become an historic mistake?

## Case History of a Failure

On May 25th, four men walked into the shining new offices of British Movietonews in London's Soho Square. They were: R. S. Howard, Editor of Gaumont-British News; Cecil Snape of Universal; Louis Behr of Pathé; and G. T. Cummings of Paramount. Inside, they were met by Gerald Sanger, Movietone's Production Chief, for a hush-hush heart-to-heart. Within a few minutes they had reached complete agreement. The Wedding of the Duke of Windsor was BARRED from every screen in Britain. Britain's cinema addicts had lost the year's biggest story after the Coronation. The trade had lost the chance to pack every movie house in the country solid, for days on end.

So quickly did the newsreel's "big five" make their decision, that at first there were rumours of hands being forced by Government pressure, or interference from powerful vested interests. Later information showed that they had acted entirely off their own bat. What underlying reasons led to the anti-Windsor policy?

* * *

The newsreels' official statement that "they were respecting the Duke of Windsor's desire for privacy," was plainly ridiculous, when every newspaper was screaming headlines round the world.

So millions were disappointed, and millions more, who believe in the future of screenews, are beginning to ask: "How long are we to be ruled by a dictatorship of bunglers? How did the present bigwigs get their jobs? By what qualifications do they hold them?"

## U.S. Mystery Story

Founded twenty-seven years ago, Pathé News is America's oldest newsreel. In the days when Pathé still had the field to itself, a young New York engineer was first becoming interested in the new industry. His name was Courtland Smith. After the war, when the Fox silent reel was started, Smith joined it, to do technical research. When sound hit the screen, few people imagined that the cumbersome system of synchronised gramophone records could ever be used by the newsreels. Nor did Courtland Smith. Instead, he persuaded Fox to try out a gadget that he had developed—the sound printed in a track along the edge of the film. Thus Fox Movietonews was born—sound was revolutionised—Smith was made famous. He remained virtual boss of Movietone until William Fox crashed—then Smith became President of Pathé News. With his steering, the oldest reel became, in the eyes of many of the critics, also America's best. It scooped the world with an exclusive newsreel contract with the Dionne Quins—first in black and white, now in colour.

In recent years, Courtland Smith has left most of the day to day running to General Manager, Jack S. Connolly. It was Connolly, last year, who beat the field, by spotting Alfred M. Landon as Republican nominee for President, and running a Pathé News story, which at the time was called the "madman's prophecy." Connolly acted as liaison with Britain's Pathé Gazette. He was in London for the Coronation—took back 25,000 ft. of film. Actual production of Pathé News stories was done by Editor Harold Wondsell.

Slowly, step by step, these three had built up the modern, fast moving Pathé News. Suddenly, all three dropped it like a hot potato. Within a few days of Jack Connolly's return to the U.S. from his Coronation jaunt, came news that he, Courtland Smith, and Harold Wondsell had resigned. Three weeks later, the why and how of the Smith-Connolly-Wondsell disappearing act, remains a major newsreel mystery.

The wildest rumour, therefore the one most worth repeating, is that America is soon to be startled with the advent of a sixth newsreel, completely in colour—and that "the trio" is to be in on its foundation. If so, they are heading for the newsreel tops.

## Rivalry in Giant Lenses

Up to a month ago, Gaumont-British claimed to own the largest newsreel camera lens, with a focal length of 40 ins. Then Paramount came out with a new contender, a lens of which they published every conceivable figure except the all-important focal length. But the general opinion was that Paramount were up to 50 inch. A few days before the Coronation, Pathé announced a 56-inch lens made by Taylor Hobson! Object of the new lens was primarily to take shots of the King and Queen on the Buckingham Palace balcony from the steps of the Victoria Memorial —roughly a distance of 400 yards. The result on the screen was disappointing. Reasons: 1. The picture was distinctly unsteady—for with such enormous magnification, the slightest movement ruins the picture; 2. The picture was distinctly out of focus; 3. Their Majesties seemed stiff and tired. But as with the colour experiment a later attempt met with striking success.

At the Derby, the giant lens was trained on the Royal Box from the opposite side of the course. And this time : 1. A new tripod took care of the wobble; 2 A new cameraman took care of the focus ; 3. The race took care of Their Majesties. As the horses thundered down from Tattenham Corner, the camera caught every detail of the mounting Royal excitement—the glasses up, then hurriedly dropped as the field closed in—the breath held for the last few seconds—the quick look at the race card—and the smiling "we've lost!" At every showing of the Pathé Derby story, those shots lifted the audience out of its seat. A final answer to the critics who suggested that these super lenses were only good for publicity stories. Moral: Giant lenses are superb for catching the great in unguarded moments, but the shots must be edited with understanding to avoid pictorial cruelty. Fly in the ointment: Because the giant lens at the Derby occupied a rota position (see *W.F.N.* for June), Pathé had to send a copy of the Royal close-ups to Movietone. Pathé ordered and paid for the lens—Movietone get the pictures.

## Disaster in 32 seconds

The pictures of the flaming "Hindenburg" will go down to newsreel history. They were shown at the official enquiry to clear up the mystery cause of the explosion. They revealed the staggering fact, that from the first burst of flame from the airship's tail to the final flicker of the fire licking the twisted ruin, only 32 seconds elapsed!

None of the five cameramen present caught the first explosion. Reason: A few years ago, when the "Akron" was landing, a sudden gust of wind swept the ship suddenly upwards with three men dangling from the mooring ropes. Two of them were killed. Foreseeing a repetition, all five cameramen had panned to the ground, as soon as the "Hindenburg" had dropped her lines. Hardly less thrilling than the picture of the flaming ship, were: 1. the half crazed yells of the cameramen to "swing over . . . look . . . for ***** sake shoot" when they realised what had happened; 2. the shakiness of the pictures, as the cameramen literally trembled with horror.

# LETTERS

## *SCRAP-HEAP TEACHING FILMS*

Mr. Ferguson's interesting article in your May issue on the appalling waste of valuable material from the super films will be appreciated by most teachers. There are, however, as he points out, welcome signs that the companies are preparing to collaborate with the schools, in some cases at least. Teachers who read your paper may be interested to know that The Dartington Hall Film Unit, in collaboration with Kino Films, is using material from Turin's *Turksib* to make a children's film on pastoral nomadism. This will be available in the autumn at latest, and those who remember the silent masterpiece will not need to be told how valuable the material in it is. The film will contrast the landscapes and ways of living in the lands of settled people with those of the steppe, desert, and semi-desert. The dependence of the nomads on their flocks and herds will be shown, the packing up of their villages, the move from one region of grass to another across the desert, the desert hardships, and the arrival to fertile lands on the other side of the desert. The film, which will be 16 mm. size, will run for about 13 minutes.

Yours sincerely,

WILLIAM HUNTER (*Film Officer*),
Dartington Hall, Totnes.

Mr. Russell Ferguson raised an interesting point in his article in the May issue of WORLD FILM NEWS. In the production of histories and biographies, newsreels and drama, the film companies include many pieces of film which would be valuable to teachers. Cannot some way be found of collecting such pieces of film after the theatrical distribution of the features themselves, and of editing them into films for use in our schools? Mr. Ferguson went so far as to propose an organisation for the provision of this service, and put forward some valuable and constructive suggestions for its institution.

But is there this need? It is true that there is the demand but is this demand based upon experience of existing films, and knowledge alike of the film medium and of the teacher's job?

What is the real function of an instructional film? To show those things which the teacher cannot illustrate as well by any other means. What is to be the function of these proposed films? To show the "settings, the sea and the ships, and the rigging . . . the costumes, the uniforms, weapons, furniture . . . the jug and bottle, window and table, stomacher and kirtle . . . street scenes, prairies, seascapes, interiors, theatres, old houses, etc., etc."—all more or less static objects better and more conveniently illustrated by means of the still-film, the lantern slide, and the picture.

The trouble is this. It is agreed that the teacher does not want Charles Laughton's *Henry VIII*, or Jackie Cooper's *Jim Hawkins*. In fact, the teacher does not want the persons at all for these are seldom like the people of the times. Besides, he cannot show a film actor on the classroom screen, not even the man who merely has to say, "You rang, my lord?" because his pupils will have seen the same man the night before in some gangster film shouting, "Say Boss! Shall I give him de woiks?" And if we are to cut out people from these feature films, we shall be left only with the static objects, the material of the still media.

And are the settings accurate? The studio artists travel all over the world gathering knowledge and material for their films, they ship back load upon load of period furniture, they spare neither time nor money in their search for authenticity. They prepare their sketches for the construction of the sets after consulting old prints and paintings, only deviating from accuracy to put in little artistic touches of their own. Then they submit these sketches to a conference of producer, director, technicians, etc. Each will have some little alteration to make—it will be difficult to light unless . . . it's not what the public expects in films of this kind . . . those arches will kill all the sound . . . etc.—and the finished plans will be fortunate if they bear any resemblance to the preliminary sketches. Mr. Ferguson mentioned Vincent Korda's Tudor interiors, but I have seen Vincent Korda's preliminary sketch of a scene which was translated in the film *Henry VIII* from the Gothic to a combination of Roman pillars and an arch such as has never been seen throughout the history of architecture. And look at *Romeo and Juliet*.

Experience has shown that the functions of the film in history teaching will be in the illustration of old customs in terms of their present-day survivals, in the animation of maps and statistical symbols, in the presentation of such ideas as progress and evolution and accumulation, and in the concentration of facts for revision. I will go so far with Mr. Ferguson—that, if there is a need of such films as he demands, then that need must be met along lines such as he proposed. But I am not convinced that there is need of these aims. I have changed my ideas during the last twelve months—a year ago I was advocating as Dr. Rusk and Mr. Ferguson are to-day—and perhaps I will change them again. But it does seem to me that teaching films must be conceived as such and made as such and not constructed from material gathered for some other, and very different, purpose.

### Guides to Films

This is not to say that the teacher cannot derive any assistance from the theatrical film. The recent issue of *Sight and Sound* contained the story of a teacher who complained that he had found it necessary to eradicate all the ideas conveyed to the children by *The Private Life of Henry VIII* before attempting to teach any historical facts about the period. This should not be so. It should be possible, if the teacher will go to the trouble of studying an historical film before it reaches the cinemas in the neighbourhood of the school, to make good use of its material as a basis for instruction and discussion. The teacher would be greatly helped in this direction if he were able to obtain guides to the films on the lines of those published by Educational and Recreational Guides, Inc., of Newark, New Jersey. The British Film Institute is obviously endeavouring to provide something of the sort in arranging, in conjunction with the Historical Association, for future historical films to be reviewed by a panel of eminent historians. The first review of this kind, that of *Fire Over England*, will be published in *The Schoolmaster* towards the end of August so that teachers may see it before the film is released.

Such a scheme could easily be extended to embrace films other than histories and biographies, and might be made a self-supporting concern as it is in America.

G. BUCKLAND SMITH

## *The Human Factor*

The great stumbling block in all forms of artistic production, has always been and always will be, the human factor. Whether it is in the case of ballet and opera, or in theatre and cinema, the problem is the same. Will the film producer or director be up against it eternally?

It is not the great technician or the man with


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THE RECORDING SPECIALISTS

# LETTERS

an immense intellectual understanding of his particular medium who will produce important artistic creations—and artistic creations which have only a limited appeal are not important to the world (although they may be valuable to other artists)—but the man who understands other men; and recognises that his relationship with his collaborators is just as important and vital as his actual knowledge and feeling for his craft.

It is men like Diaghileff who make great ballet through their understanding of other men; or St. Denis, who built up the Compagnie des Quinze, who makes great theatrical productions. But where is such a leader of a group in films. Perhaps he will spring up in this country out of the Documentary group, when they develop more feeling and less technique; or in the Soviet Union, when politics and social considerations are not so vital; or in the United States, should the star system ever weaken. But wherever he does spring up and whoever this leader is, he will be a man who understands the human needs of other men, and who understands that productions must be balanced and that brilliance in any one particular direction is valueless.

All the component parts must be balanced. Brilliant camerawork on bad actors, is as valueless as fine acting on an unlit set, or clean recording accompanying a bumpy camera truck. Just as actors trained in different schools of acting will never be able to fit in with each other, your art directors and musical composers will never be of value to the film director until they can learn to subordinate their art to the art of film making.

Michel St. Denis, who is building up a theatre group in this country, has important things to say about stage producers, and we may make valuable use of what he says by applying his ideas to film production. "The theatre requires flesh and blood material, not intellectual invention," he says. "The man who will create great drama is the man who feels physical life, who can experience the feelings which the actor is to portray. He must give the people working under him the feeling of freedom—freedom to invent by themselves. He must understand the language and the slang of his electricians and carpenters, and share the anxieties of all working on the production. He must not sit behind a large desk remote from the production. These things are far more important than conceptions, however great the conceptions may be."

Armchair arguments are valueless, because they fail to allow for the human factor. We sit and sip our coffee and say: That would make a good shot. This would be a brilliant cut. And if we recorded something like this the film will be "a riot" No. Never. Few films will ever be "riots," or world successes until the human factor is more carefully considered.

HAROLD LOWENSTEIN

## *Coronation Newsreels*

I read in your very interesting journal for the current month the "Diary of the Coronation Reels," and at the risk of spoiling a good story, here are the facts.

Special negative film stock used for taking the scenes inside Westminster Abbey on Coronation Day did not come in any "specially sealed package from America" a day or two before the Coronation. As a matter of fact, for some weeks before the Coronation date experiments were made in the Research Laboratories of Kodak Ltd., at Wealdstone, Middlesex, with a view to hyper-sensitising negative film for this event, and although originally it looked as if the speed of the negative film could not be boosted up sufficiently to give a well-exposed picture, further research showed that it was possible. This fact was known several days before the actual Coronation ceremony to all concerned.

I am sure you will agree that credit should certainly be given where it is due, namely, to the Research chemists and technical staff of Kodak, Ltd., London.

E. E. BLAKE, *Managing Director, Kodak Ltd.*

### *What foreign correspondents say about the Coronation Newsreels*

*Warsaw:* Only a fifteen minute reel, which was "badly produced and gave a very poor impression of the events of the day."

*San Palo* (Brazil): Fox reels arrived July 4th by Air France. Shown at four cinemas in the town, and enthusiastically received. Interesting to note that no Jubilee reels ever reached here.

*Vienna:* Paramount reels were shown, and appreciated pictorially. But the sound —i.e. the Abbey service—was a tremendous disappointment, after hearing it on the wireless. The films lacked unity, and dwelt far too much on the King, the Queen and the Procession. There should have been more human interest, more signs of jubilation in the streets.

## *Moonlight Sonata*

United Artists present a Pall Mall Production *Moonlight Sonata*, featuring Ignace Jan Paderewski, a piano and an architecturally incredible concert-hall. Mr. Lothar Mendes, a director whose promise in *Payment Deferred* was obscured in *The Man Who Could Work Miracles* by the cavortings of the special effects department, appears here as a man without the artist's eye for a scene or an image. Incredible though it may seem, the first twenty-minutes of this picture contain no dialogue and no natural sound, only the post-recorded piano music. This becomes a fault when, as here, there is no visual development of story, emotion, atmosphere or even incident. The first mobility of action comes when the director decides to photograph the reaction of a small child to the maestro's playing. This is done for all the world to see by waving a handkerchief in the poor mite's face, the typically bored, reflex-action smile that could not possibly be inspired by even the Hungarian Rhapsody being the result.

After this curtain-raising musical interlude, Paderewski remarks to some adoring club members "Sometimes, when the circumstances and the audience are right, when you can work on the emotions—then comes the miracle." But Mr. Mendes and his cameraman must have been out having one when this line was recorded, for they ignore its advice, and are far more interested in shooting from underneath the piano than in making pictures that "work on the emotions." The miracle is that there manages to emerge from this morass of production faults and wasted opportunities a sense of wonder at this toothless, wrinkled veteran who is still so young in his hands and his heart. The trade-show audience applauded dutifully each routine portion of genius as it was doled out, but they should have been hissing these monied charlatans who call themselves film makers.

What might a film artist have done, once this superb artist in music had signed on the dotted line! Has it occured to Pall Mall Productions that Paderewski was once prime minister of Poland? That the melody of his music should be moulded as an epic undertone to the strife of his life? Here we could have created an autobiography, real and tremendous, a new kind of film even. And what do we find? Expensive photography that often consists of frame succeeding frame with not an object in focus. Not so much as the smell of a story idea, merely the old, old distinguished-visitor-comes-to-change-my-life strip-tease. Inferior, unnatural lighting, and not one single fragment of film acting, save from stage-actor Eric Portman. Nero fiddled while Rome burned, and Paderewski plays while Beethoven is murdered by a man with a megaphone and a turtle-neck sweater. Ars Gratia United Artists!

RODERIC PAPINEAU.

## *Book Review*

**HANDBOOK OF THE TELEVISION EXHIBITION AT THE SCIENCE MUSEUM** (H.M. Stationery Office, 6d.)

Television is on show at the Science Museum. To stimulate interest and provide information, an exhibition ranging from the earliest apparatus to the latest large-screen process has been staged at South Kensington. It was opened on June 11th and will continue till September.

For many the opportunities of inspecting what television can and cannot do are still few and far between. Crowded demonstrations at chain stores, railway termini and the like give only an incomplete impression and afford no basis for judgment. At this exhibition the prospective buyer can make a closer investigation of the new medium and the student can see it in its historical perspective.

A sixpenny pamphlet bearing the imprimatur of the Board of Education and the Science Museum has been issued in connection with the Exhibition. It is an authoritative exposition, in lucid and non-technical language, of the apparatus necessary for television transmission and reception. Each piece of apparatus described is accompanied by an outline of its development from early experiments. In this way, the authors will prove their point that television has not, as is often believed, resulted from concentrated research during the past ten years, but has quietly evolved from the enthusiastic though sometimes impracticable proposals of nineteenth-century scientists.

A copious bibliography ranging from semi-popular books and articles to the papers of learned societies accompanies each chapter, while not the least useful feature is a map showing the field-strengths of the Alexandra Palace signal at different points throughout greater London.

The pamphlet provides a solid, if unimaginative foundation of information and opens up a rich field of further reference. S.L.

# Lines to a Half-starved Star

**Dr. H. W. Taylor, Vice-Chairman of Bolton's Public Libraries Committee, likes film actresses who are real women.**

"Women in British films," he said, "are all thin-lipped, all about two nutmegs in weight and appear to be of the same age—from 14 to 17." He added gloomily: "We have no real women like those we see in industrial towns like Bolton."—*News Item.*

O, throw away the load of Hay*
That constitutes your diet;
Get down to steaks and creamy cakes
And let your waists run riot.
Go feed on chocs until your frocks
Relieve themselves of buttons;
Just try, my dear,
That French idea—
Returning to your muttons.

If you're thin-lipped and cobra-hipped
And girlish in appearance,
A busy spoon will pretty soon
Reduce the old ground-clearance.
Just set about a quart of stout
And oysters—nothing flimsy—
Once that's inside how you'll deride
That bit of nutmeg whimsy.

O, turn not back though friends may crack
About the fat-stock prices;
Go on and seize such groceries
As candies, cakes and ices.
Just help along your *on bon pong*,†
Make no attempt to hide it;
Though Time may march
Just take your starch
And string along beside it.

Though critics scream at your régime
When eating—don't you break it;
With two more stones around your bones
I guess that you can take it.
You'll soon begin to wear a chin
That you can take a jolt on—
You'll be cold meat to Wardour Street
But boy! how sweet to Bolton.

*Doctor, not Will.
†*En bon point* to you, Mr. Goldwyn.

**Snooks Grieser, W.F.N.'s disgusting lift-boy, took Freddie Bartholomew for a ride the other day.**

*Snooks* "So you're the guy that Greta Garbo kissed in *Anna Karenina*, hey?"

*Freddie* "Oh, yes. Rather. Jolly good I thought."

*Snooks* "And what's your reaction to that dame?"

*Freddie* "Oh, she's quite a nice girl but ticklish."

*Snooks* "Just an iconoclast, eh? Take that and that and that! Third floor, bandages, baby-linen, sissy velvet-suits with lace trimmings and *World Film News*."

## AMAZING REVELATIONS

### *W.F.N. Exposes New Studio Horror*

There are many lessons to be learned, I always think, from the advertisement columns of our Great British Press. (You know which are the advertisement columns, don't you, Aubrey? They're the ones about B.O. and we don't mean Box Office.)

For instance, what could turn a more revealing light on the conditions existing in the Film Industry to-day than this little slice of life, culled with infinite care, as one would extract a lump of kidney from a steak-and-kidney pie, from an advertisement for a face-cream?

It is headed, simply but incisively: "At the Film Studio." It reads thus:

*Leading Actor:* What a lovely creature Vera is. I have never seen such a beautiful girl in a film studio before.

*Actress friend:* I know her very well. She has wonderful brains and personality, but she could never get leading parts in films before because her complexion was so bad. Three months ago she started using that wonderful . . . . etc., etc., etc.

I do not think it would be very difficult for readers with the kind of mind I know you to possess, to picture the kind of treatment poor Vera had to endure before she saw the light. Something like this:

(*The scene is the Casting Director's office. The Casting Director, Mr. Finestein, is sitting at his desk, cutting up pages of the* WORLD FILM NEWS *into the shape of swastikas. He seems unconscious of the beautiful woman standing before him. But then, Mr. Finestein always looks unconscious. Need we say that the beautiful woman is Vera?*)

*Vera:* But Mr. Finestein, I have brains; I have personality.

*Finestein* (*with old-world courtesy*)*:* You've also got enlarged pores, lady.

*Vera:* But I'm educated. I've read Dumas.

*Finestein:* I'm not interested in the colour of your clothing.

*Vera:* Don't you see, Mr. Finestein, I got culture. I could knock that Garbo for a row of ashcans any time you please.

*Finestein:* Not with that wart on your nose, you couldn't.

*Vera:* You seem to forget I matriculated!

*Finestein:* Listen, baby, contortions don't get a goil nowhere. Not if she's got a sallow skin, they don't.

*Vera:* See here, stupid. I gotta head on my shoulders.

*Finestein:* Sure. A blackhead. But if ever we want a bearded lady, I'll bear you in mind. And now scram, will ya? You're giving me spots before the eyes.

Hurt, angry, flushing hotly through her freckles, Vera sweeps out of the room. But in three months she is back, smooth-skinned, radiantly lovely. She has exchanged a blotchy skin for a career on the films. She would have done better to have stuck to her blotchy skin.

# COCKA

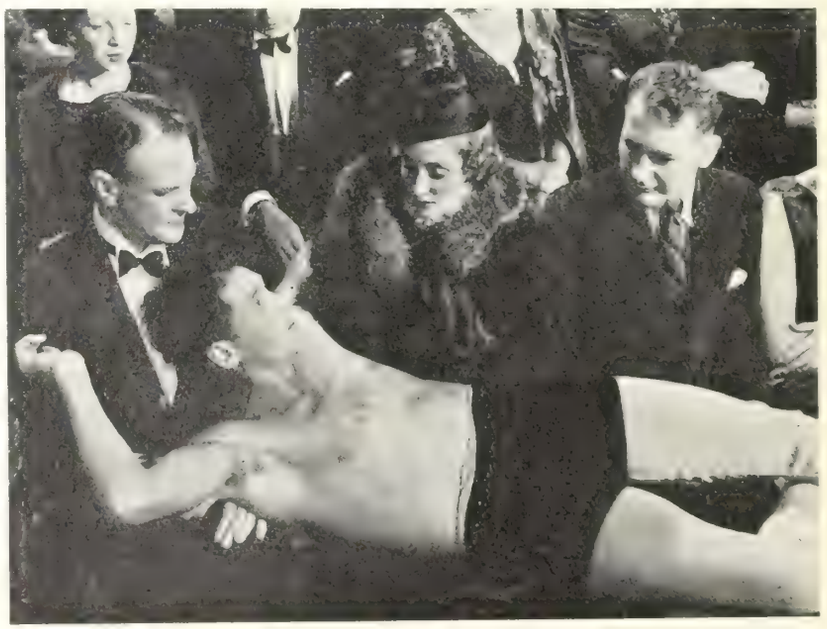
## By Rodney

## *FOR ADULTS ONLY*

"In private life he lives simply. His normal diet is plain dog biscuits garnished with gravy. Occasional dishes of raw or cooked meat are approved, but what gives him the greatest possible pleasure is a nice piece of liver."—*News Item.*

Guess what film star that little morsel refers to, my pretties. Clark Gable? No.

## British Exhibitor Faces up to American Film Salesman



# LORUM

## Hobson

Fred Astaire? As if! John Barrymore? How *could* you! Fred MacMurray? Well, *reelly!*

It sound like it refers to a dog, doesn't it? Well, it does refer to a dog. The dog is called "Scruffy," and it acts in films. Human actors, of course, act in films and are called lousy. Scruffy has his nice piece of liver handed to him. Film actors have to do a lot of hard drinking to get their livers. Which only goes to show.

## *Tell your Kiddies then Run Like Mad*

In spite of enormous expense and spirited opposition from the man from whom we pinched the original idea, *W.F.N.* will begin publication next month of a new comic-strip.

It is called "Alex, Issy and Little Audrey" and it tells of the adventures of these three little madcaps in a series of fat-headed situations. You'll laugh your fool heads off.

What is the secret of Alex's Inexhaustible Purse? Ah, we're not telling. We don't know ourselves. And how did Issy escape from The Castle That Nobody Loves at Shepherd's Bush? Don't ask silly questions.

And who is the mysterious figure, "La Belle Lejeune," who lives in an enchanted grotto at Tulse Hill and thrashes about like a mad thing throughout the entire series? Aren't we being *maddening!*

Be sure you get somebody else's copy next month. A free pattern of a horse's nose-bag with every one. The month after that we are giving away a free pattern of a horse.

## Music Lovers' Corner—

### Conducted by Uncle Oboe

*I am a composer and do most of my composing on tablecloths. Can you tell me which knife I should use for the purpose of sharpening my pencil? Friends notice my confusion and laugh at me. Can you help me?*

B.F.

If you compose sea-shanties, you should, of course, use a fish knife. For Viennese waltzes, the pencil should be sharpened with a soup spoon. For sonatas, use a fruit knife. For your friends, use a blunt axe. You *must* let me see your compositions some time.

* * *

*Can you advise me what to do with the rear half of my piano-stool? I find this portion gets very little wear as I always adopt the forward seat, except for very rough going such as Stravinsky. I hate to see so much good piano-stool going to waste.*

CURIOUS.

I believe that this problem is much more common than most people imagine and I admire your courage in voicing it. Dotti, the Armenian virtuoso, overcame the difficulty by having his two young nieces occupy the waste space. Elsie Stubbs, the Dagenham Girl-Wonder, used to fill it up with a specially built bustle containing sandwiches and a flask of cocoa ; while Drool, the Russian, used the rear portion of his stool as a bed for vegetable marrows. Sir Thomas Beecham wears one of these marrows on his watch-chain to this day.

Your best solution, however, is this : sometime, when you have a couple of days to spare, push the piano round to the other side of the stool. In no time at all, the stool will be worn evenly all round and it will then be time for you to think up some other fool question to ask me, you big morbid thing. You ought to try going out more and meeting people.

* * *

*What is the best way to distemper a harp?*

R.H.

Get an old trumpet and fill it with distemper. Apply the mouth to the wrong end and the fluid can then be blown in a thin stream on to any portion of the harp. By pressing the stops of the trumpet at random an effective stipple effect and a lot of quiet fun can be obtained. The harp strings can be cleaned afterwards with a small file.

* * *

*Is there any method of utilising the exhaust fumes from a trombone?*

PRO TROMBONO PUBLICO.

Yes, there is. A Mr. George Teak of Pontefract has perfected a device known as the Teak Non-Return Trombone Duct which, in the words of the inventor, "puts this vital force to work."

The principle is this : the trombone is "tubed," in the same way as broken-winded horses, and the vapour is led off in a small rubber pipe, which is carried over the blind-side ear of the player, into a separator where it is washed and dried. After that it is pumped into the heating system of the concert hall or theatre, or else led away by pipe-line and used for cleaning conservatories. It has been computed that one performance of *Il Pagliacci* would supply enough vapour to heat an average sized flat until it is well-nigh unbearable.

* * *

*Who was the first man to play swing music on a spinet?*

ANXIOUS.

A Mr. Edgar Toop of Thirsk, on the occasion of the first jam-session organised by Charlotte Brontë. And did that baby go to town !

* * *

*My clarinet gets full of bread crumbs when I play after tea. What do you suggest?*

MADCAP MOLLY.

Eat cake.

What did you do, Daddy, in the great Harrogate Conference?

## Quip Tease Corner

"Gonged but not forgotten," as the film-star said after being stopped for speeding.

* * *

"St. Pancras Station is the thief of time," as the reporter said, waiting in the bar for the Foreign Star to arrive.

* * *

"Now the fat *is* in the foyer," as the cinema-manager said when the Mayoress arrived for the Charity performance.

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**etc., etc.**

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# Citizens of Paris Make a Film

*By MARIE SETON*

THE French cinema industry is astonished, and not a little disgruntled, at the gigantic project which the Popular Front film organisation, Ciné-Liberté, is undertaking—the production of the French Revolution film, the *Marsellaise*. The methods which Ciné-Liberté is adopting in order to finance and produce this film are unique in the history of the cinema for the "backers" and most of the actors are the Paris populace themselves. With the assistance of the Trades Unions, who have 5½ million members, many mass meetings are being organised where 2-franc shares are sold in order to defray the £50,000 production cost. The Trades Unions have already bought 50,000 francs worth of shares, while the Government has lent its moral support. There is a joke going round Paris to the effect that should there arise a hitch and the services of the regular Army are not forthcoming for the film's battle sequence, then several factories will proclaim a strike, and the men, most of whom have done their military service, will impersonate the victorious Republican Army who routed the Prussian interventionists.

### Renoir produces

Jean Renoir, the son of the painter, is in charge of the production. Among his recent films are an adaptation of Maxim Gorky's story, *Les Bas-Fonds*, due to be shown at the Curzon Cinema, London, shortly; *La Grande Illusion*, a story of German prison camps during the war, and the election film, *La Vie est a Nous*, sponsored by the French Communist Party and recently shown at the London Film Society. He is at present writing the scenario of the *Marseillaise* in conjunction with four other directors of production: Germaine Dulac, the well-known woman director, Jean-Paul Dreyfus of Ciné-Liberté, Andre Zwobada and Louis Joly, a representative of the Paris workers. This "collective" is in contact with historians, designers, musicians and technical advisers. The dialogue for different sequences will be written by various well-known writers. For example, a discussion between Robespierre and Bressot on the conflicting ideas of Revolution at that period is being reconstructed by Marcel Pagnol the playwright and film director from historical records of their various statements. Henri Jeanson one of the leading dialogue writers in France is responsible for the Parisienne workers sequences. Lenormond and other writers will work on further sections. The film will probably appear in September.

### Maurice Chevalier to play

Two of the leading parts will be played by Maurice Chevalier and Jean Gabin; while Renoir has the original idea of trying to have the smaller parts acted by the descendants of people who took an active part in the Revolution. The scenarists have decided that since the commercial cinema has made many spectacular films of the French Revolution, and have laid particular emphasis upon the storming of the Bastille, the *Marseillaise* will open after this event and that the Revolution in all its phases shall be seen through the eyes of the man in the street.

The film opens in a village some distance from Paris in July, 1789. The life of the villagers is shown and contrasted with the luxurious living of the local chatelain. There is a brooding restlessness and discontent among the peasantry. They are beginning to strain against the remnants of the feudal system which hedges them around. There is one peasant who says little but thinks the more (Jean Gabin). Suddenly the village is thrown into a turmoil by the news that the Bastille has been stormed by the Paris workers. The long-smouldering resentment of the peasants flares up against their masters; if the townsmen can make a successful revolt so can the countrymen. The peasantry storm the castle.

### Coachman's story

The story moves to Versailles where the plans of Louis XVI to escape from France are seen through the eyes of one of his coachmen. The women of Paris march upon the Palace and finally the King is arrested. His arrest has an electric effect upon the populace. The traditional veneration and respect of the Monarch is suddenly broken and as he is escorted back to Paris not a single man in the crowd bares his head.

The next sequence shows the different Courts of Europe and their reaction to the execution of the King of France. His death is a threat to their own security. Emigrés are flocking to England, Germany and other Courts seeking assistance against the Revolution which has turned them out of power. Everywhere there are preparations for intervention. Back in Paris the revolutionaries are in the throes of discussion. Clubs have been formed where the workers of varying shades of political opinion express their views. Here the contending ideas of Robespierre (shown as the Stalin of the time) and Bressot (the Trotsky of his day) are thrashed out. It is clear that the Clubs of the French revolutionaries correspond to the political parties in France to-day.

At last the clash of interests is settled in battle. France is invaded by the Prussian Army in which 50,000 emigrés are fighting. On the Republican side there are foreigners who wish to die for the new Republic. They are the eighteenth-century International Column. After a terrific battle victory goes to the ragged untrained Republican army. When Goethe hears the news he exlaims: "There is something new under the sun." The *Marseillaise* has a Left political twist which aims at making it a very topical history.

# *Austria Appeals for State Support*

*By L. PERKOFF*

The crisis in the Austrian film industry was recently voiced by Dr. Paul, one of the heads of the industry, in an impassioned S.O.S. and appeal for state support, namely, a 10 per cent state credit on each film produced. Despite the clear statement on the present catastrophic state of the industry, Dr. Paul's analysis did not touch on the fundamental issues that are the main cause of this dead end.

Since Austria with its relatively small population of six million people cannot hope to produce films for its own consumption solely, it must of necessity keep its eye on the German market. Thus it has become subservient to German producers and capital. The possibility of smooth-running production on this basis has proved unworkable. Firstly by the official government fear of an *Anschluss* with Germany, which expresses itself in the not infrequent banning of German films with strong Nazi propaganda, and then by the introduction of the Goebbels Aryan paragraph which has excluded many non-Aryan film craftsmen and actors from most films made in Austria which have German interests. (Those few Austrian companies with production units in Vienna that might wish to employ non-Aryan labour on account of merit alone, are willy-nilly forced to adopt a 100 per cent Aryan policy in order to cater for the German market. Thus the boycott is unofficial and very little advertised.)

### Non-aryans excluded

It is almost an impossibility for anyone who is not "pure" Aryan according to the Goebbels doctrine of racial purity to obtain employment in Austrian studios. To achieve this complete boycott the *Reichsfilmkammer* in Berlin use their own specific methods of intimidation and spying. Two Austrians are employed to scrutinise the racial origin of all film workers. These men, Messers Zoidl and Rossi, are in constant touch with the *Reichsfilmkammer* in Germany and inform this body if a Jew or anyone partly Jewish is being employed in an Austrian film. In the circumstances that particular film would be banned in Germany, a predicament which Austrian film units could not afford.

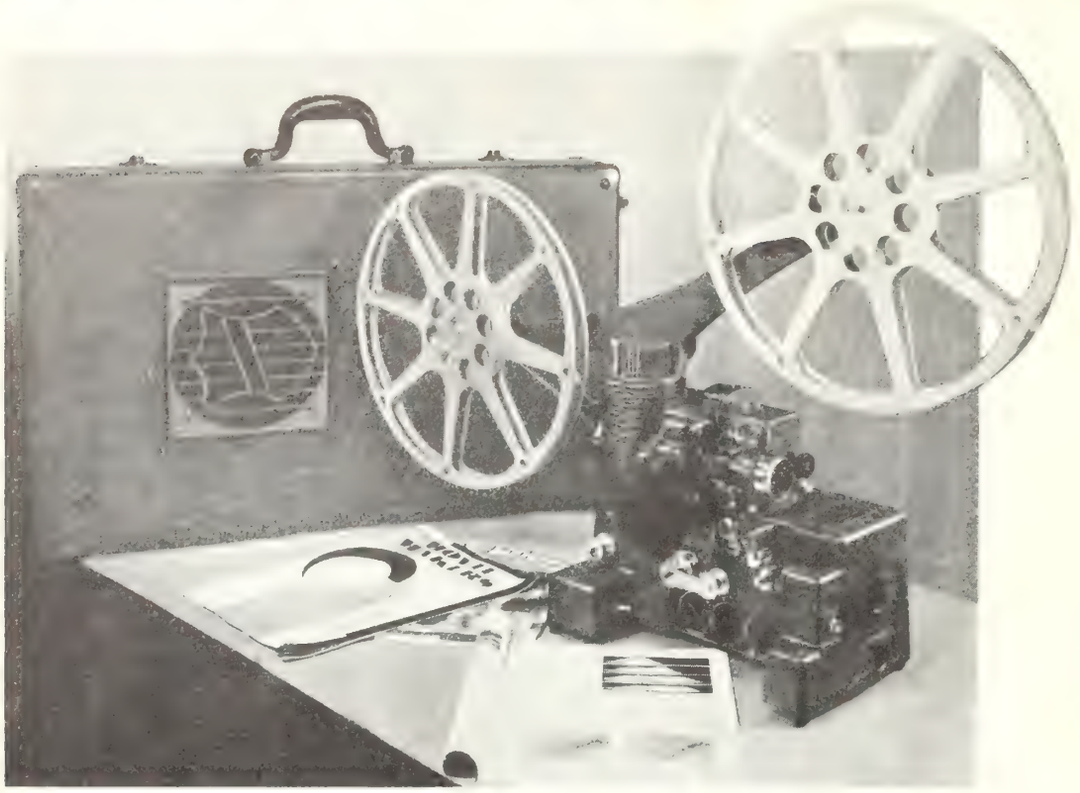
In the last year, of the 343 films that were presented in Austria, 155 were American, 112 German and only 21 Austrian. Nevertheless 3,000 people were employed in the Austrian film industry in the last year. The present year offers no such prospects, for the crisis that arose between Germany and Austria has been active for the last six months and has reached no satisfactory solution. The intervals between the production of films in Austria grows longer and longer, until now a comparative state of zero has been reached.

The only substantial company in Austria with possibilities of taking an independent line, however limited that may be, is the Tobis-Sascha Company. This is due mainly to the fact that 50 per cent of its interests are Austrian. But it is unlikely that financial support from private sources will be forthcoming in the present state

(Continued on previous column)

of affairs when German-speaking films must inevitably be subservient to the German market. While the Czecho-Slovakian film industry is supported by the state, in that all productions are given a 25 per cent state credit, it is unlikely that the Austrian film industry will receive similar support.

# BELL & HOWELL TALKIES



*for*

## BETTER TEACHING and BETTER ENTERTAINMENT

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# PEOPLE WITH PURPOSES

## *Preaching to the Converted*

### by E. Billock

RECENTLY there has been a pronounced tendency among the makers of documentary film to attempt no longer to distribute them through the usual channels, i.e. the ordinary cinemas. They are now concentrating on what they call the "non-theatrical field," or in other words, free shows to anybody throughout the country who will guarantee an audience.

Formally, the majority of documentary films had a fairly extensive showing in cinemas. The Industrial Britain series of the Empire Marketing Board was distributed by Gaumont. New Era and later A.B.F.D. put out many of the early Post Office shorts. But since *Night Mail*, no Post Office films have been seen in the cinemas, and I now understand that *Night Mail* has been withdrawn for the non-theatrical side. Surely, if the maximum publicity and propaganda value is to be obtained from these films, this is a mistaken policy?

The ideology of documentalists, as propounded by Mr. John Grierson, is civic education. They talk of horizons having widened and viewpoints becoming specialised. They hope by dramatising the citizen in his job and his home, to make him realise his responsibilities to the community. They hope to make citizenship exciting. All very praiseworthy and ambitious. And to bring this about they lump their films together and show them to Y.M.C.A.'s, church groups, debating societies, and so on throughout the country. Of course, it is admitted that, at the same time, many schools are served. This is wholly admirable and immensely worth while; but it is the adult non-theatrical showings that seem to be a waste of time. For several reasons.

### Free Shows—suspect

Firstly, the groups to which the films are shown, as typified above (the examples given may be rather narrow), are usually gatherings of people who are, and have been, much more inclined to realise their responsibilities to the community than the ordinary man in the street. The very fact that they belong to such bodies, surely means that they realise the value of organising together, to act or think. In fact, in many instances, it is a case of converting the already converted. Again, if the showing is one to which the general public can go—a free show—it is almost always suspect.

In a capitalistic community, where even charity is merely a bait for a knighthood or a short-cut to Heaven, anything free is felt to have a catch in it somewhere. And so the free films are never really appreciated. They may be "very nice" or "very interesting," but they are promptly forgotten. But if the documentary film is seen in a cinema by people who have paid their hard-earned money to get in, this "dramatisation of actuality," sandwiched between synthesism, will become memorable. It is surely here that converts will be made. There will be no suspicion from the audience. No feeling that they are being educated or lectured. And the psychological result will be that the film's moral will be appreciated a hundred per cent. more than at the free show.

### Ceremonial belly-crawl

It may be said that it is the renters who have forced the documentary film-makers into the non-theatrical field. That to get the pontifical gentlemen who "know what the public wants" to accept a documentary film at all, the makers have to perform a ceremonial belly-crawl down Wardour Street. But surely not now? Documentary is strong and growing every day. It has obtained a vast amount of publicity over the last years. Its leaders are known and respected. To an outsider, it would appear almost like running away just as the fight is won to suddenly go over to the "free-show". It is such an easy way to get your audience. And the documentary film group that has risen in Britain is so much superior to the type of film show at which you get a free sample as you go out.

If the new quota act is going to make a larger allowance for British shorts, surely our documentalists are going to take advantage of it? If they keep at it we may yet see the day when realist films will be as usual and as acceptable in our cinemas as newsreels are at present. Then, and only then, will they reach the really representative body of the people.

## SHORT FILMS REVIEWED

*KEW GARDENS*, a Short Film Production, produced by Harold Lowenstein, directed by Philip Leacock, photography by Vivian Braun.

This film has the great merit of being completely unpretentious and presenting its subject-matter in a simple and exceedingly agreeable manner. The general scenes of the Garden show a sense of observation and humour, and the close-up photography of the plants is satisfactorily lucid. Considering that the various activities at Kew are all mentioned, including the more scientific work, the film succeeds in getting a great deal of information across, although much of it is bound to be superficial. It does, however, represent a very excellent type of short for almost any audience, and may be regarded as having some educational value, outside the cinema, as well.

Some of the commentary is rather too flowery in its phraseology, and there is one bad mistake, where an orgy of menacing music accompanies a truck shot through the central-heating plant; this merely creates a mock melodrama and detracts from the clarity of the rest of the film.

C.M.

**"We Live in Two Worlds"**

*WE LIVE IN TWO WORLDS*

This is one of the major productions of the G.P.O. Film Unit and is a direct descendant of such films as *Night Mail*. The most gratifying thing to note in this type of film is not merely the facilities which the G.P.O. Film Unit gives for maturing a subject over a period, but also the fact that in telling the story of modern communications the makers of the film have also been allowed to present, not merely in intellectual but in dramatically moving terms, the idea of internationalism.

The film is credited as "A film talk by J. B. Priestley." It is certainly this, but it is also something more. It is the first purely individual production of Cavalcanti since he joined the docu-


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## People with Purposes (cont.)

mentary film movement in England, and as such is a personal triumph. With Grierson as producer he has been completely successful in co-ordinating the talents of Priestley as writer and talker, and of Jaubert, as undoubtedly the finest musician writing for the screen to-day.

The film is simple in shape. Beginning with straight shots of Priestley (whom some may feel to be a not entirely sympathetic screen character) it passes to the picture of a Switzerland rich in tradition and hemmed in not merely by natural barriers, but by the artificial barriers of customs and tariffs and the armed force which lies behind them. A rocket carrying a telephone wire across a mountain gorge signals the other and more important world—the international world; the map of Europe is no longer in frontiers but in lines of communication: road, rail, air, telephone and wireless. In this frame Switzerland appears very differently, as a country of manufacture and travel and tourism, and as a supplier of electric power to Europe. At this point the film might very well have ended had not the director succeeded in bringing off an extremely difficult sequence with complete triumph—a sequence mysteriously presented, but quite movingly and simply stating the idea of internationalism and carrying us up into a night sky with this idea; the measure of its success is that the night sky does not leave us in the air.

### Jaubert's Music

The technical qualities of the film are probably the best the G.P.O. has yet given us. The pulse of Jaubert's music runs magnificently through every sequence. The photography is excellent and the editing a genuine re-establishment of the value of smoothly-moving visuals.

The main points of criticism may be said to be, first, that Priestley himself tends to be somewhat too heavy and downright; and second, that the ideological point of change from the national to the international world should surely have been emphasised much more; the rocket signals it, but the subsequent statement is underplayed, and may for this reason cause some slight confusion in the mind of an ordinary audience. It is interesting to note that Cavalcanti has returned to the idea of tinting, each of the three sequences being presented in a different colour; while this is not to be recommended as a general principle, it is certainly very successful in *We Live in Two Worlds*. C.M.

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## *Social Study of Film*

A feature of the third issue of *Theatre Workshop*, of interest to all cinema students and cinema workers, is a *Social Study of the Film* by Jay Leyda and Peter Ellis, both well-known film critics and Contributing Editors to *Theatre Workshop*. The *Social Study of the Film* is the first critical film bibliography ever to be compiled and should prove of tremendous usefulness.

The balance of the third issue is devoted entirely to articles on Staging and Directing. It includes an article on the *Naturalist School of Directing of Otto Brahm* by Herbert Henze, a *Study of the Epic Realism of Bertold Brecht* by Mordecai Gorelik, and the first part of the B. E. Zakhava's famous work, the *Principles of Directing*, which appears for the first time in English in the pages of *Theatre Workshop*.

# Filming the Life of Trinidad

### by Irene Nicholson

It is now just a year since Brian Montagu and I left for Trinidad to direct a film for the *Trinidad Guardian*, the Island's largest newspaper. The film has been called *Callaloo*, which is a corruption of an old Carib word meaning a hotch-potch of everything. It is the name given to a local soup into which all kinds of ingredients are put. Trinidad itself contains an extraordinary variety of peoples. Almost none of the original Carib Indians remain, having been entirely wiped out by various European invasions. English, French, Spanish and Portuguese have settled in the island, and the Negroes, East Indians and Chinese originally imported as labourers (the Negroes as slaves, the East Indians and Chinese under systems of indenture) have all made the island their home. All these races equally call themselves, and are, Trinidadian.

**"Callaloo"**

The mixture of races causes colour prejudices and difficulties of such complexity that it would take a lifetime to sort them all out. White people will not mix with people of colour, and coloured people of light complexion consider themselves superior to those who are dark.

The industries of the island are as varied as the population. Besides the mining of asphalt and oil, there is extensive cultivation of sugar, cocoa, coconuts, rice, grape-fruit and bananas.

All these races and all these industries are included in the film, so that it well deserves the name Callaloo.

It is now about two years since the *Trinidad Guardian* actually initiated the project of the film, which, it is hoped, will raise sufficient funds to help in the building and endowment of a sanatorium in the Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad. Trinidad itself first heard of the idea when the *Guardian* held in its columns a competition for local "stars." The competition was divided into seven sections—for the hero, heroine (these two open to members of the white community), Creole vamp, villain, East Indian, Chinese and juvenile leads. Competitors entered by sending in their photographs, and readers of the *Guardian* voted by coupon.

The first problem was the story; how to invent one that should include a leading part for each of the variegated cast! And how, moreover, it should be made to include the many industries, amenities and beauties of the island, and be, in spite or on account of this grand "callaloo," a dramatic and truthful whole.

We spent many weeks getting to know the island. The scenario eventually evolved begins with a prologue describing how Trinidad, though once part of the mainland of South America, has now its own unique existence, how its peoples came there and what they came to do, and how they now live, together but separate.

Although a love story then begins, the real stars are workers in the fields and in the town. Ursula Johnson, a young Indo-Chinese, will attract attention. The scenes are laid in Port of Spain, and on the estates and beaches and beauty places of both Trinidad and its ward Tobago.

We spent three months "shooting" and took eighteen thousand feet of film; this will be cut eventually to about 6,000 feet.

Mr. des Foldes, of R.C.A. Victor, visited Trinidad a short while ago. He recorded a number of gramophone records especially for the film, and these will be put on to film and synchronised when we return to England. The story is played entirely in mime, and will be accompanied by local songs and music which will provide rhythmic and dramatic emphasis. Only the prologue has spoken words. Edric Connor, a Negro baritone, will sing several songs of local composition. Some of the music has been written by himself.

## *Students of Biology see Revision Films*

Revision films for matriculation and school certificate candidates were shown at the Tatler Theatre, Charing Cross Road, on the last two Saturdays in May. Over 1,400 boys and girls from London Schools filled the entire theatre at both performances.

The following films made up the two hour programme: *The Amoeba*, a microscopic and diagrammatic study; *The Tortoiseshell Butterfly*, *The Frog*, *The Earthworm* and *The Black-headed Gull*, showing in detailed close-ups the transformations of each ; *Breathing*, *Blood* and *Circulation*, three biological expositions ; *Roots*, *The Life Cycle of a Plant* and *How Plants Feed*, illustrated by accelerated growth; and *The Expansion of Germany* and *The Growth of the Franchise since* 1832 for historical students.

The films were made by Gaumont-British Instructional, with the collaboration of Dr. Julian Huxley and H. R. Brewer, M.Sc. (Zoology and Biology), Professor E. J. Salisbury, F.R.S. (Botany), Professor Winifred Cullis, C.B.E. (Hygiene), and Dr. G. P. Gooch, Professor Namier and J. Hampden Jackson (History).

On June 12th and 19th revision films for 1st M.B. and Intermediate Science Examinations were shown to students taking the University Biology and Zoology courses. The programme included a selection of the films mentioned above, together with *Hydra*, *Obelia*, *Sea Urchin*, and *Heredity*. The showing was private and films were shown in their entirety without the Censor's Certificate for public exhibition.

This experiment by The Tatler of showing films for the benefit of students is a big step towards education-by-film. It is probably the first showing of its kind outside the class-room, and it is hoped that next year provincial schools and universities will be supplied with similar facilities.

# FILM GUIDE

## *Shorts*

**Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves** (Puppets in Gaspar-color).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Slatinay and George Pal
CARLISLE: Star Cinema — July 18, 3 days
CHEADLE HULME: Elysian — July 1, 3 days
LONGRIDGE: Palace — July 15, 3 days
SHEFFIELD: Weston — July 8, 3 days
WIGTON: Palace — July 1, 3 days

**Birthplace of America** (British originals of American pioneers).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* A. Moncrieff Davidson
ALTRINCHAM: Hippodrome — July 26, 3 days
BACUP: Regal — July 19, 3 days
BOLTON: Gem — July 8, 3 days
BRISTOL: Olympia — July 5, 3 days
Premier — July 8, 3 days
CASTLETOWN, I.O.M.: Ideal — July 8, 3 days
CONGLETON: Premier — July 8, 3 days
ECCLES: Regent — July 5, 6 days
HASLINGDEN: Empire — July 22, 3 days
HULME: Popular — July 29, 3 days
LONDONDERRY: Midland — July 26, 6 days
Strand — July 19, 6 days
NORTH WALSHAM: Regal — July 19, 3 days
OLDHAM: Cosy — July 2, 2 days

**Cover to Cover** (Documentary of book production).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Alexander Shaw
BIRMINGHAM: Kingsway, Kings Heath — July 5, 3 days
CASTLETON, LANCS.: Cosy — July 26, 3 days
HALIFAX: Kingston Picturedrome — July 8, 3 days
HARBOURNE: Picture House — July 22, 3 days
NORTHALLERTON: Empire — July 5, 3 days
NORTH SHIELDS: Gaiety — July 29, 3 days
PLAISTOW: Plaza — July 19, 3 days
ROMSEY: Plaza — July 22, 3 days
THORNABY: Queen's — July 1, 3 days

**Dragon of Wales** (A travelogue attempting to tackle economic conditions).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* W. B. Pollard
TORQUAY: Electric — July 12, 6 days
WIMBLEDON: King's Palace — July 26, 6 days

**Enough to Eat** (The nutrition film).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Gas, Light and Coke Co.
*DIRECTION:* Edgar Anstey
LONDON: Everyman, Hampstead — July 12, 6 days
Monseigneur, Charing Cross Road — July 12, 3 days
Monseigneur, Strand — July 12, 3 days

**Fishing on the Banks of Skye**
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
ADLINGTON: Cinema — July 8, 3 day
BUXTON: Opera House — July 5, 6 days
LIVERPOOL: Tatler News Theatre — July 22, 3 days
SOUTHAMPTON: Cinenews Theatre — July 15, 3 days

**For All Eternity** (A film of English cathedrals).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson
AMPTHILL: Kinema — July 19, 3 days
BIRMINGHAM: Capitol, Ward End — July 8, 3 days
IRLAM: Palace — July 19, 3 days
OLTON: Cinema — July 29, 3 days
SHEFFIELD: Manor — July 5, 3 days

**Heart of an Empire** (Historical significance of St. James's Park and the surrounding buildings and memorials).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson
BALLYMENA: Lyric — July 26, 3 days
HYDE: Queens — July 29, 3 days
PEMBERTON: Carlton — July 19, 3 days
Queens — July 19, 3 days

**Islands of the Bounty** (Islands associated with the famous mutiny).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
ACCRINGTON: King's — July 5, 3 days
ATTERCLIFFE: Palace — July 8, 3 days
BOLTON: Palace — July 1, 3 days
BRADFORD: Tennyson — July 19, 3 days
CARLISLE: Star — July 8, 3 days
HEREFORD: Odeon — July 8, 3 days
KIRKCALDY: Palladium — July 14, 2 days
MARGATE: Parade — July 8, 7 days
SHILDON: Magnet — July 12, 6 days
SOUTH SHIELDS: Palladium — July 1, 3 days

**Key to Scotland** (Documentary of Edinburgh).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson
GLASGOW: Olympia, Bridgeton — July 15, 3 days
HULL: Monica — July 1, 3 days
STOCKPORT: Curzon, Offerton — July 5, 3 days

**Lobsters** (Documentary of lobster fishing).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Bury Films
*DIRECTION:* John Mathias and L. Moholy Nagy
MANCHESTER: Tatler, Oxford Street — July 12, 6 days

**Men Against the Sea** (Documentary of North Sea trawling).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Vernon Sewell
ANDOVER: Odeon — July 8, 3 days
DONCASTER: Arcadia — July 19, 3 days
GLASGOW: Olympia, Bridgeton — July 1, 3 days
LOSSIEMOUTH: Town Hall — July 8, 3 days
YORK: Grand — July 19, 3 days

**Milestones** (The varying types to be seen in England).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* A. Moncrieff Davidson
BEIGHTON: Central Hall — July 1, 3 days
BRISTOL: Knowle — July 19, 3 days
CLITHEROE: Grand — July 12, 2 days
DALKEITH: Pavilion — July 12, 3 days
FLEETWOOD Pier Pavilion — July 11, 4 days
IRVINE: Regal — July 1, 3 days
KINGSBRIDGE: Regal — July 5, 3 days
KNUTSFORD: Picture House — July 1, 3 days
LITTLEBOROUGH: Victoria Hall — July 5, 3 days
MACCLESFIELD: New — July 15, 2 days
MALTBY: Picture House — July 5, 3 days

### Feature Films for July Release

**Black Legion** (Warner Bros.)
*DIRECTOR:* Archie Mayo
*STARRING:* Humphrey Bogart, Dick Foran, Ann Sheridan

**Bulldog Drummond at Bay** (Wardour)
*DIRECTOR:* Norman Lee
*STARRING:* John Lodge, Victor Jory

**Feather Your Nest** (A.B.F.D.)
*DIRECTOR:* William Beaudine
*STARRING:* George Formby, Polly Ward

**Gold Diggers of 1937** (First National)
*DIRECTOR:* Lloyd Bacon
*STARRING:* Dick Powell, Joan Blondell

**Green Pastures** (Warner Bros.)
*DIRECTORS:* Marc Connelly, William Keighley
*STARRING:* Rex Ingram, Oscar Polk

**Magnificent Brute** (G.F.D.)
*DIRECTOR:* John G. Blystone
*STARRING:* Victor McLaglen, Binnie Barnes, Henry Armetta

MARPLE: Regent — July 1, 1 days
OAKHAMPTON: Cinema — July 29, 3 days
PENDLETON: Scala — July 26, 3 days
PWLLHELI: Palladium — July 12, 3 days
RHOS: Palace — July 1, 3 days

**Night Mail** (Documentary of the northward trip of the postal special).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Basil Wright and Harry Watt
ADLINGTON: Cinema — July 5, 3 days
BRADFORD: Grange — July 29, 3 days
DUBLIN: Phoenix — July 12, 3 days
LEEDS: Gainsborough — July 12, 3 days
LYMINGTON: Lyric — July 15, 3 days
MIDDLETON: Cosy — July 9, 2 days
NORTHFIELD: Picture House — July 19, 3 days
SHEFFIELD: Weston — July 8, 3 days

**Plane Sailing** (The ins and outs of gliding).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Bosworth Goldman
HULL: Cecil Theatre — July 19, 6 days
JERSEY: Opera House — July 26, 6 days
KIRKCALDY: Rialto — July 8, 3 days
LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Road — July 19, 7 days
NORWICH: Carlton — July 12, 6 days

**Seventh Day** (How London spends its Sunday).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* A. P. Barralet
GOOLE: Tower — July 29, 3 days
HULL: Carlton — July 8, 3 days
Langham — July 5, 3 days
Savoy — July 29, 3 days

**The Grey Seal** (Its life and habits).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*DIRECTION:* John Mathias and Cyril Jenkins
LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Road — July 26, 7 days

**The Saw Fly** (Nature Study).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Gaumont-British
*PRODUCTION:* Mary Field
MANCHESTER: Tatler, Oxford Street — July 19, 6 days

**Way to the Sea** (Documentary of the roads and railways from London to the coast).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* J. B. Holmes
LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Road — July 12, 7 days

## Foreign Films

**The Court Waltzes** (German—French version).
*PRODUCTION:* Gunther Stapenhorst for Ufa
*DIRECTION:* Ludwig Berger
*STARRING:* Fernand Gravey, Jeanine Crispine
LONDON: Curzon — July 1, indefinitely

**L'Equipage** (French).
*PRODUCTION:* Pathé
*DIRECTION:* Anatole Litvak
*STARRING:* Annabella, Jean Murat
LONDON: Studio One — July 1, indefinitely

**Masquerade in Vienna** (Austrian).
*DIRECTOR:* Willi Forst
*STARRING:* Paula Wessely, Adolf Wohlbruck
LONDON: Forum — July 1, 3 days

**Men and Jobs** (Russian).
*PRODUCTION:* Sovkino
*DIRECTION:* Nacharet
LONDON: Forum — July 18, 14 days

**Storm Over Asia** (Russian).
*PRODUCTION:* Mezhrabpomfilm
*DIRECTION:* V. I. Pudovkin
LONDON: Forum — July 4, 14 days

**We from Kronstadt** (Russian).
*PRODUCTION:* Lenfilm
*DISTRIBUTION:* Film Society
*DIRECTION:* Vinievski
LONDON: Academy — July 1, indefinitely

# *It pays to use*

# CINÉ-KODAK FILM

EXPOSURES cannot always be 100% accurate, but even where quite serious exposure errors are made, the finished films will not tell the tale if Ciné-Kodak Reversal Films (16 mm. and Eight) are used for black-and-white pictures.

In the course of processing by the reversal method (the cost of which, naturally, is included in the price of these films) *exposure mistakes are automatically compensated for* by means of a photo-electric control device, which is exclusive to the treatment of Ciné-Kodak film. Thus, even with considerable errors of exposure in either direction, you can be sure of pictures rich in tone and detail, and of a constant brightness on the screen.

Look at the accompanying illustrations. They are enlargements from two rolls of Ciné-Kodak Pan. Film, both of them over-exposed from *f*5.6 to *f*1.9, and under-exposed from *f*11 to *f*16—the correct stop being *f*8. The left strip shows you how you are "punished" for your errors by straight processing; the right strip shows how the Reversal Process "lets you off," giving you positives of an almost constant density whatever the vagaries of your exposures.

Another big advantage of Ciné-Kodak Reversal Films is their almost complete absence of graininess when projected. In the course of processing, the negative image, consisting of the larger grains, is bleached out, leaving only the minute unexposed grains to form the positive that you see on the screen. *This applies with equal force to the duplicates which by the same reversal process can be made from the original positive.*

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world FILM news

# AMATEUR AND TECHNICAL SECTION

Illustration of Macabre Lighting

FADE IN THE FUTURE
FILMING BRITAIN, No. 3
SOCIETY AND CLUB NEWS
HOW TO BUILD A SET, No. 2

CONTRIBUTORS

Andrew Buchanan

Evelyn Spice

H. Chevalier

# Fade in the Future

## by Andrew Buchanan

*This is the final article of Mr. Buchanan's series for amateurs. Under the title "Film Production from Script to Screen," these articles will be published in book form by Faber & Faber, early in autumn.*

WHERE is it all going to end—or begin!

Technical prophets visualise strange circular cinemas fed by Televising Studios, with a perpetual pageant of stereoscopic pictures, in natural colour. They talk of screens as large as theatre prosceniums, of spectacles mightier than ever before; of new marvels in sound recording—new personalities who have mastered a new technique demanded by televising-movie-cameras—new make-up—everything new, except, of course, the foundations upon which the Film is built—the Story. That can look after itself. As technicians, naturally, they are distracted by each new invention which enables them to embellish their pictures—a spot of polish here, a dash of colour there, and so on, and as the modern film is about seventy per cent technical, and thirty per cent creative, the tendency is to make flawless productions of unsuitable subjects.

Nevertheless, some realise that the real future of the film depends upon those who have its independence at heart—people who refuse to be distracted by the enormity of the whole business—who can see that the bones beneath the perfumed flesh need resetting. They are, and always have been, experimenting to produce subjects peculiar to the screen, and, from my experience, their efforts have advanced the medium to a far greater extent than the costly pictures which are the result of exploiting every new invention to the utmost degree. When talking pictures were first made possible, everybody produced talking pictures! Dialogue had to be introduced at all costs, otherwise the results would be out of date. Directors were far more concerned with the task of finding subjects depending upon speech than with the fact that, valuable and marvellous though the invention was, it tended to mould the film into a pattern foreign to its nature.

### Sanity to the Survivors

So with Colour. Subjects are chosen to exploit every possible hue. Discretion is thrown to the wind. The intensely dramatic value of one *red* drop of blood in an otherwise black and white picture is lost sight of. They will drown themselves in Colour—dye in it, in fact, after which sanity will come to the survivors, and the magical process will be introduced judiciously.

Stereoscopic photography will make "characters completely life-like." What characters? One should be careful to ascertain they are the right ones, and that they justify the concentration of technical magicians being bestowed upon them, so that they "stand out" in all their natural colours, their softest whispers being audible to thousands of people simultaneously. Being human, these characters can talk, and the formula for the successful film is that they should exercise this gift to the utmost! But is the power of speech of primary importance to the screen? Thus the mind of the man who has the future of film at heart should reason, accepting nothing until it has been analysed, and found correct.

Of all media, film offers the greatest opportunity to the student, for, despite its air of self-confidence, its luxurious setting, and its world popularity, it is still seeking its true self, or, perhaps I should say, seeking a way to popularise its true self which has been discovered by the Documentalist. The technical advances made in photography, with its smoothly moving cameras, and in sound recording, during the past fifteen years, have aided film towards its goal tremendously, and yet they have tended to hide that goal from view—a goal which is solely dependent upon the method of approaching the subject matter one intends to portray.

That is why the person with the humblest outfit, or no outfit at all, providing he has a mind fully conscious of true film values, will come nearest to the solution.

### Find the Formula

Throughout this series, I have stressed the need to make films on paper before tackling actual production, and it is upon paper that the future will be gradually formulated, regardless of one's status in professional or amateur circles.

And yet, it may be said, progress would never allow film to find a formula, and to adhere to it for evermore, for whilst there is life there will be evolution towards something better—or perhaps, it would be safer to say, different. That is true, but let us first find the formula, and then let the future look after itself, rather than to talk of progress, as we do, with the formula undiscovered. Therefore, follow in the wake of the progressive Documentalists, realising their limitations from a fictional point of view, and endow their principles with human drama and comedy. Frame the story you are longing to produce in realistic settings, and prepare to meet the criticism of those who can think of no way in which to produce pictures save within a studio.

They will tell you that climate is going to reduce your carefully planned shooting schedule to chaos. You reply that, with the aid of artificial lights, you can secure delightful results, at dawn, noon and dusk, even when the sun is not shining. They will tell you that the highly paid cameramen who specialise in synthetic close-ups of beautiful women are in a class alone, and that the documentary cameramen who are excellent at securing close-ups of cog-wheels, are hopeless when asked to obtain attractive shots of blonde belles and their brave beaux. That, too, is an exaggeration. I have worked with cameramen for years, whose salaries amounted only to the weekly luncheon bills of their studio counterparts, and they have shot stars of the first magnitude so perfectly that the said stars have declared they have never been so beautifully shot before. In fact, one of them, a particularly famous and attractive personality, actually took her film to a big studio where she was making a feature picture, and showed it to the crack technicians as an example of just how she should be filmed!

The keynote of this concluding chapter is encouragement—to pull down finally the giant structure that has no foundations—the colossal studio system which has developed *Retaking* into a fine and costly art—which allows all the people making a picture, to make so much money out of it, that the picture makes a loss. The grandeur of Hollywood's commercial methods have been applied in Britain, which should have instituted a film industry according to its limited market.

Shakespeare must surely have perceived the dim shape of film when he wrote, "All the World's a Stage . . .", for indeed it is to the film-maker, although he has not realised the fact. Instead, his synthetic efforts justify the sentence, "All the Film's a Stage . . .", bounded by studio walls.

The limits of the territory available to the film-maker are marked by the rising and setting of the sun, but what shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and works only in his kitchen? When the existing gulf between documentary and fictional films has been fully realised, and bridged by the plans of the imaginative director, the result, the fictional-documentary film, will achieve universal recognition.

Then, the Future will slowly fade in.

## *SCOTTISH EDUCATIONISTS STATE THEIR NEEDS*

The Scottish Educational Film Association announces the following requirements:

1. We want more films of the following kinds:

(A) AMATEUR PRODUCTIONS.

(1) 100ft. and 200ft. animal studies suitable for city children.

(2) 100 ft. and 200ft. studies illustrating city activities, maritime scenes, etc., for country children.

(B) TRADE PRODUCTIONS.

(3) 100ft. and 200ft., for children of from 5 to 12 years of age, showing very simple processes of country life, simple industrial processes, and animals and birds with their young. (The Carrick Series mainly consists of this type.)

(4) 400ft. Nature films for old children, showing habits of animals and birds and the use made by man of both animals and plants.

(We do *not* want the "speeded-up" film. There is a good supply of that kind.)

(5) 200ft. or 400ft. simple "Science" films for primary school children illustrating the more elementary principles of Mechanics, etc., or demonstrating simple machines.

(6) 100ft. microscopic studies of the lower forms of plant and animal life.

(7) 400ft. films of foreign countries, illustrating principal products, etc.—either with or without diagrams and with a minimum number of maps.

2. Generally speaking, we want—

Films with the minimum of commentary.

Films that have been planned for teaching purposes.

Films that are better, on the average, in respect of photography and reproduction.

Cheaper films.

*Note.*—Reference is to *silent* films only (sub-standard).

# FILMING BRITAIN—Article No. 3

## by Evelyn Spice

I HAVE had so many letters asking for more particulars regarding the British Amateur Services Club that I am going to use this page in WORLD FILM NEWS to outline, in greater detail, the opportunities offered to Amateurs.

Its *purposes* have been outlined in earlier issues of WORLD FILM NEWS so I shall not repeat, but go straight to the Amateur's individual problem.

To encourage 16 mm. and 9 mm. documentary makers, there are prizes offered for films on:

Hygiene and Home Planning
Motoring
An Orient Line Cruise
Scottish Youth Hostels
Architecture

These are the first of a number of prizes that will be offered to members of the Club throughout the next year.

### What to do

Choose which one of these subjects you can handle to the best advantage.

Write to me and tell me what your choice is.

If you cannot cope with any of the above mentioned subjects, write and say so and we shall keep you in mind for any fresh subject which may come along.

Give me as many particulars as you can about your work, your opportunities locally, where you will spend your holidays, and your own interests in general. I cannot help you if I have no facts to go on.

Send me, if you wish, a draft of your proposed treatment of the subject, when chosen. Perhaps I shall be able to suggest changes or additions, and much time will be saved on the final shot by shot script. You will find it is a real pleasure to shoot to a good script, well prepared in advance. It is well worth putting a good deal of time on the preparation and less on the actual shooting.

### Subjects and Treatments

Now as to the subjects. There are many treatments possible for each of them and in each case it is obvious that, without planning, the film could easily be a hotch-potch with a little of everything and none of the interesting detail and human interest that makes films live. This applies, most of all, to the Motoring and Youth Hostel subjects, but, to a slightly lesser extent, to all of them.

What then seems to be the principal thing to keep in mind in order to escape the muddled touch-and-go-on film?

Mainly this. Keep the treatment simple. Don't try to tell too much. Make a simple example (typical of many) tell the whole story. The example may be a person or a group of persons, an incident or a group of incidents linked together, a single day or hour, etc., a single house or street, etc.—or any two or three of these coupled together.

This simple example linked with, perhaps, a general opening or closing sequence to widen the film's horizon, will allow us to take time for the small details about people and things which are so vital to the film's interest.

This probably doesn't mean a thing to anybody, so I shall give an example of one of the "examples" I've been talking about.

A group of people—a family, preferably—are travelling by car and intend to have a camp lunch; can't make up their minds where to stop; mother very fussy; son, who is driving, thinks he knows a good place a mile or so farther on. They drive several miles and still haven't found the spot. Father is wanting to stop straight away as he is very hungry. Finally their problem is solved for them by the car. It stops. The son discovers that he has run out of petrol. Mother angry; a fine to-do as the place is not nearly so nice as a dozen others they have passed a while back. Father says nothing but begins to get out the lunch kit very quickly. Sister helps. Mother sulks at first, then, cheered by sight of food, brightens up. Son goes off to find nearest telephone or garage, for petrol; returning with can of petrol as lunch is ready. Family is happy again. The countryside is wonderful to the family *after lunch*. The farmyard nearby is a wonderful place where there are darling little pigs. The camping place is wonderful, everything is wonderful. They discover a little brook, a rabbit's burrow. Father has a nap. Everyone is happy.

### Post-Synchronising

This film would be made with a view to sound being superimposed. The very short sentences, if carefully recorded at the time of shooting, could be post-synchronised, if it were decided to put sound on the film. Music would emphasize the changing moods of the family.

Plenty of human touches. Plenty of opportunity to show the beauty and tranquility of the country as seen by a city family. Plenty of opportunity to emphasize that it is the can of petrol which is responsible for their enjoying one of the finest experiences of a lifetime.

It will be seen from this, I hope, that the single incident is good only if it has a wide background both visually and in human significance. This incident, for instance, is a thing which happens to almost every family on a camping trip, not a unique occurrence.

(NOTE: When I asked you earlier on to send me a draft of your proposed treatment, I meant send me something quite as brief as the above "example." It will serve as well as an elaborately detailed script. Doing it that way, you will have time to draft two or three treatments, and if you are in doubt about which one to choose, I may be of help to you.)

## *Open to Professionals*

Our amateur competition scheme has stirred up great interest and speculation in professional circles. Strong jealousies have been exhibited on the subjects at the disposal of amateurs and barred to professionals. We, therefore, offer consolation prizes: the first, £5; the second, £3, and the third, £1 for films performing a local service, by accredited professionals. Selected subjects will have to be considered by Miss Spice as we wish to avoid duplication and unpleasant rivalries.

Mr. Alfred Hitchcock, best known of 16 mm. cinematographers, stands a fair chance of a prize and we hope he will enter. Mr. John Grierson has in advance booked a subject to be shot at East Malling agricultural research station.

## TECHNICAL TITBITS No. 1

There are various ways of cleaning cinema screens, some screens can be cleaned with methylated spirit, others with soapy water; the best dope for a plain white matt surface, in my opinion, is "Ceilingite" when properly applied, but best of all, send it back to the makers and have it done properly.

* * * *

The best way to remove hardened emulsion from the runners and tracks in a projector is by damping it with spittal and rubbing off with moistened fingers. In obstinate cases, a copper coin only should be used, any harder metals will permanently damage the fine surfaces of the runners.

* * * *

A double gin taken internally before cleaning optics is a valuable aid. Simply breathe on the optics and polish off immediately afterwards—its not so wasteful anyway!

* * * *

That fluffy dirty appearance surrounding the projected picture at times is officially termed "dirt in the gate." It is due to your own carelessness as a rule, but this unsightly mess which hall-marks you as a bad operator, can be tactfully disposed of by (1) blowing out the aperture with a strong gusto, (2) framing the picture so that the dark line separating each frame is brought down, or up, on the screen to cover up your dirty past.

* * * *

A quarter pound of rice which has been heated until it is a golden brown, placed into a sealed container with 1,000 feet of film, has been found more satisfactory as an absorbent of moisture than calcium chloride on wrinkled paper, and has no detrimental effect on the film, says the *Filmo Topics*.

I recommend this tip, but be careful the rice does not become too moist in itself, otherwise it will stick to the film, and the next time you show it, a rice pudding effect might be seen on the screen!

* * * *

The interval between the film in the picture gate on 16 mm. and the sound record into the photo electric cell is 25 frames.

DAVID MYERS.

# FILM SOCIETIES AND CLUBS

**THE LONDON FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Miss B. Frey, 56 Manchester Street, W.1.

The offices of the above society will be closed from July 12th to August 9th.

**CAITHNESS FILM SOCIETY:** Secretary, J. W. P. Faint, Esq., Sumburgh, Hill Avenue, Wick, Caithness.

On May 21st, Miss Hazel Terry, grand niece of Ellen Terry, made a special journey to Wick to appear at a variety entertainment in aid of local charities. Miss Terry, star of *The Marriage of Corbal* and *Our Fighting Navy*, was given a tremendous ovation when she arrived at her hotel, and later she attended a dance and mixed most happily with everybody.

The visit was arranged by Mr. Faint, Secretary of the Society.

**CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Rev. Ferdinand Valentine, O.P., 36 Great Smith Street, London, S.W.1.

Discussing the Annual Report at the June display at Millicent Fawcett Hall, at which the President, Bishop McNulty of Nottingham, was present, the Organising Secretary, Rev. Ferdinand Valentine, O.P., said that during the past year progress had been maintained. Besides the monthly displays at Millicent Fawcett Hall, there had been 120 displays. Several films, including an industrial film entitled *Great Awakening* and a film on the Holy Eucharist, were now in production. The Projection Group has increased its stock.

The Mime Group is the Society's most important development, because the Catholic film depends on its mimetic quality.

The Group is under the able direction of Miss Julia Murray, a pupil of Miss Gertrude Pickersgill of the L.A.D.A., and a weekly class is held at the Interval Club, Dean Street, Soho. Full particulars may be had from the Assistant Secretary, 36 Gt. Smith Street, S.W.1.

In collaboration with Miss Pickersgill, the Mime Group presented *The Mirror*, an Eastern fable, after which *Dominican Mass* was screened, and the programme ended with the film made by J.O.C. (Christian Working Youth) showing recent demonstrations in Belgium.

The next display is at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, July 7th, at Millicent Fawcett Hall, Westminster. Tickets 1*s.* and 1*s.* 6*d.* from The Assistant Secretary.

**MANCHESTER AND SALFORD FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, R. Cordwell, Esq., 13 Milwain Drive, Heaton Chapel, Stockport.

The following officers have been elected: Mr. T. Cavanagh (late Secretary, Manchester and Salford Workers' Film Society), Chairman; Ian R. Robinson, Hon. Membership Secretary; F. J. Stevenson, Hon. Treasurer. Subscription remains at 10*s.*, which can be paid in instalments of 2*s.* 6*d.* within the first six months after joining. Seven performances are to be arranged at the Rivoli Cinema, Rusholme, with an additional show if finances permit. Mr. J. A. Brewin has been nominated for the Executive of the Federation of British Film Societies, which has been applied to for membership. Discussions are taking place as to possible co-ordination with other film societies giving lectures, etc.

**OXFORD FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, E. F. Bowtell, Esq., 105 Victoria Road, Oxford.

The thirteenth and last meeting of the season, was held at the Scala Cinema on June 6th, when *Der Schimmelreiter*, starring Matthias Wieman and Marianne Hope, headed the programme. Taken from the old Friesian legend, *Der Schimmelreiter* is notable chiefly for its exterior photography and for its simplicity in depicting the struggle of a fenland people against the constant danger of flooding. Scenario and direction is by Curt Oetel and Hans Deppe, production by R. Fritsch Tonfilm.

Supporting films included *How to Vote* (Robert Benchley's sequel to *How to Sleep* and *How to Behave*), *Hungarian Dance* (a Fischinger musical abstract), Massingham's comedy *And So To Work*, and Disney's *Band Concert*.

**WEST ESSEX FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, F. J. Philpott, 7 Wellington Road, East Ham, London, E.6.

The Society is making preparations for the production of another film. The script is nearing completion, and it is hoped to commence shooting in the near future. Further information regarding the production will appear later.

A film unit has been formed which will include among its operations the filming of carnivals, fêtes, etc.

**MERSEYSIDE FILM UNIT:** Hon. Secretary, Cyril Ray, Esq., 377 Oxford Road, Manchester 13.

In view of the film industry's alleged reluctance to make films to the requirements of teachers and of the rather unorganised activities of most amateur film societies, a recent Lancashire development is not without interest.

The Merseyside Film Institute Society formed twelve months ago the first amateur film unit to be organised by a branch of the British Film Institute. The unit was composed of two production groups, one working with 16 mm. film stock, the other with 9.5 mm. Two films were completed last summer, one, *Morning Boat*, 300 feet long on 16 mm., the other, *The Rise of Liverpool*, 300 feet on 9.5 mm. The former was a straightforward documentary film of ferryboats, the latter a more ambitious historico-geographical account in which moving diagrams were employed together with "straight" photography.

As a result of the experience gained in the making of these two films, the unit has now decided to work solely on 16 mm. stock and to make films of specific educational character. Work has begun on two films about tides, and scenarios written after consulting prominent Liverpool educationalists. One film is in general terms, planned to be a "background" or revisional teaching film, the other a shorter film, is designed purely as a classroom teaching film to be used with detailed teaching notes.

Unusual facilities have already been given by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, the Tidal Institute and Liverpool University.

Unlike most amateur film-making societies, the Merseyside unit is employing the more expensive negative-positive film stock, which permits of an unlimited number of copies being cheaply made, rather than reversal stock, as it is expected that there will be some demand for these teaching films.

**ACE MOVIES:** Hon. Secretary, Channon Wood, Esq., 15 Openview, S.W.18. Studio, 90 High Street Mews, Wimbledon, S.W.19.

The assortment of building materials, referred to last month, which were cluttering up all approaches to the studios, have now been absorbed into the completed set, and the cameras have started to turn. Clifford West, directing, comes into his own after an irritating period of waiting.

The only serious snag to date is a "floater," designed to be easily mobile but which, owing to the enthusiasm of the construction department and the large quantity of wood at their disposal, defies the efforts of seven strong men and necessitates the muscular resources of the whole unit every time it has to be moved.

The lighting equipment has been completely overhauled and several new units added. Kandem lamps, together with those constructed according to Ace Movies' specifications, make up the illumination available to 15 kilowatts.

Visitors are welcome to come on Thursdays and Saturdays, 8.30 to 11 p.m.

**THE EXPERIMENTAL FILM EXCHANGE:** Hon. Secretary, Vivian Braun, 27 Ridgeway, S.W.19.

The object of this Society is to learn the rudiments of cutting, camera angles and lighting and to evolve a grammar of the film. The first step is the filming of emotional episodes—re-union, excitement, misery, fear—in fact, to shoot short film essays in order to learn the best approach to each subject.

As yet, experiments on both standard and substandard have been few, but it is hoped that this summer new fields will be explored and a new approach to the cinema developed. It is hoped to enrol more members—but the point is emphasised that the Society's work is not simply amateur film-making, but practical experiments in cinema as an art.

**AYR FILM UNIT:** Hon. Secretary, A. Cunningham, Esq., 8 Alexandra Avenue, Prestwick, Ayrshire.

The unit, founded some six months ago with twelve members, has now completed camerawork on its first production, and its membership has increased to thirty. The film, provisionally titled *Checkmate*, is from an original story by G. R. Cooper, the director, and should be off the cutting benches in a fortnight or so. Scenes were shot mainly indoors by artificial light, and on location in the entrance hall of a cinema, in a hotel ballroom and a local billiard hall.

During the summer, interest will be centred on an advertising film which the unit is making at the request of Ayr Attractions Committee. Although setting out to advertise Ayr, the film will have a story running through it, written by a small committee of club members with the cooperation of Mr. Cooper. Shooting is expected to cover about six weeks.

Membership of the club is open to all who are interested in cinematography whether they own apparatus or not. Jobs can always be found in the various departments.

## *Club News (contd.)*

**BRADFORD CINE CIRCLE:** Hon. Secretary, A. C. Whitehead, Esq., The Towers, Clayton, Bradford.

On Sunday, June 6th, shooting began on the Society's first colour production, *Beauties of the Yorkshire Dales*, which is being made by the 16 mm. section. A party of members covered some 150 miles and secured some fine shots.

Another section has been busy on Mr. J. North's scenario of *Murder Will Out*. It is being made on 9.5 mm., and will probably be 500 feet in length. Shooting began on June 13th, in Horton Park, Bradford.

During the summer impromptu meetings are to be held on Monday evenings at the house of the President, Mr. C. Tempest, 386 Great Horton Road, Bradford, and all interested will be cordially welcomed.

**WIMBLEDON CINE CLUB:** Hon. Secretary, C. W. Watkins, 79 Mostyn Road, Merton Park, S.W.19.

Many social functions and rambles, in addition to the monthly meetings, are being arranged for both ordinary and associate members during the summer months. The 1937-38 programme is also being arranged, and will include the usual number of evenings allotted to associates, of which there are now about fifty.

The club has had the privilege of filming the local Coronation festivities for the Council, and with several cameras on the job a record of the complete week's programme has been made. The Mayor has granted the Club free use of the film, and a public showing is being arranged to take place in the Town Hall.

For the third time in the history of the Wimbledon Cine Club, several members have decided to take their holidays together; this time the party will visit Germany on a canoeing tour.

The current production of the club, *Swing Mr. Charlie*, is continuing under Brian Smith's direction, but it is unlikely that it will be finished before the commencement of the winter session early in October.

The Club has now joined the British Film Institute, and through them are affiliated to the London Film Institute Society, which means that members will now receive additional benefits.

**METROPOLITAN-VICKERS AMATEUR CINE AND PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, R. M. Kay, Esq., Trafford Park, Manchester 17.

*Manchester Exports* is the title of a new 16 mm. documentary film just being put into production by the makers of *Inward Bound*, the Gold Medal film of the Manchester Ship Canal.

The film is planned to show that Manchester, concerned not only with cotton, holds an important position in engineering and other fields. Naturally a film of this nature will not attempt to catalogue in detail the many branches of industry that flourish within the city, but will endeavour to give an impression of each. Close-ups will be used very largely, partly to give a personal touch to the film, and partly, due to practical considerations, to facilitate lighting and shooting industrial scenes.

J. M. Fleming, who is in charge of camera-work, has had experience both in this country and the United States, whilst the direction will be in the hands of R. M. Kay, also largely responsible for the scenario.

At the recent Annual General Meeting of the Society, new officers were elected for the season 1937-8, and constitution changes effected which involved the splitting up of membership into Technical and General classes. A short 9.5 mm. comedy, *Treasure Hunt*, is now on the editing bench and will be released shortly.

**ELTHAM CINE SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Miss V. D. White, 36 Craigton Road, Eltham, S.E.9. Studios, Melladew House, 256 Eltham High Street, S.E.9.

The Society is now hard at work on *The Emperor's New Clothes*, a sound film in natural colour. This is an adaptation of the old fairy tale of the same name, and is being shot "straight."

Much interest has been aroused by the publication of descriptions of the apparatus used in the production of amateur sound films. The apparatus used by this Society was designed and built by two members, Messrs. D. Pruden and J. Shore, and the Secretary will be glad to give details to anyone interested.

For one week in September, a unit will be on location at Bedruthen Steps, Cornwall, for the production of a short outdoor film in colour. When completed, the studio will be ready for the next full-length film, as yet untitled.

## *2,000 Exhibitors can't be wrong*

The Western Electric Co. Ltd., are this year celebrating their tenth birthday in the United Kingdom, so I for one, wish them "Many Happy Returns."

As one of their very first projectionists, it would be ten years ago that I was first introduced to them in a one-roomed apartment in Bush House. At that time, they were superintending their first two installations in the West End: to-day, owning several floors at Bush House with a huge factory at Cricklewood, they have well over two thousand installations in cinemas in this country alone.

This amazing growth is not surprising when one considers the faithful service these equipments have given to exhibitors all over the world during that period. This is due not only to the constant research on the problems of sound recording and reproduction, but to a great degree on the wonderful service organisation that keeps these thousands of equipments in first-class order. It can be said of each installation, whether it be ten years or one month old, that it is in the same condition as when originally installed, therefore the sound, though in many cases improved upon, is the same too as at the commencement.

Without exception, every other known make of sound apparatus has been displaced at some time or other by Western, yet it is extremely seldom, if at all, that any other make has displaced Western on the grounds of inferior sound.

There was a time when exhibitors revolted against what they termed "Western's exorbitant service charges," but they knew only too well what that service meant—day and night service at call for any immediate emergency—and an engineer always on the spot and always on the dot.

Considering that Western have no vested interests in the Cinema themselves, and bearing in mind the high initial and subsequent servicing costs, one can only conclude that on the merits alone of their wonderful equipment and faithful reproduction and service, they have rightly commanded the praise of millions and millions of picturegoers. And remember, 2,000 exhibitors can't be wrong, can they? D.M.

## *Left Book Groups Plan Realist Films*

FILM & PHOTO LEAGUE: A conference on the use of sub-standard film in social education, held on 7th June, was attended by delegates of the Left Book Club, London discussion circles, and other interested societies. Mr. Michael Burke, opening the conference from the chair, briefly outlined the history of working-class film organisations, and held that we were on a wave of fresh demand for progressive and purposeful films. Dr. John Lewis, for the Left Book Club, spoke on the possibilities of ciné projection as partner to the printed word, and he emphasised the value of visual image in the forceful presentation of economic statistics.

The League organised the conference as a definite step towards the formation of associate film units within all the Left Book regional and other groups, to concentrate on the production and exhibition of realist films, under guidance and training from a vital central organisation.

The conference closed with the projection of two of the League's films, one of a new type, embodying the symbolical use of Kodachrome colour in dealing with the public events of the last month. These films, together with other examples of what may be done in creative use of the film medium, will be shown at the Left Book Club Summer School at Digswell Park from 31st July to 14th August, where the League will also run a film work-room and stage a short story film. Those interested, who were not represented at the Conference, should get into touch with the Secretary at 3 Somerset Terrace, W.C.1 (Tel. EUSton 4829).


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# HOW TO BUILD A SET

by

H. Chevalier, F.P.S., A.S.E.

*This is the second article of a new series. The first article appeared in the June number.*

WE are now going to examine the requirements of the kitchen set. As previously explained, our film opens in the kitchen of a dilapidated house in the Midlands, with the final sequences also staged in the same kitchen.

The first points to be settled are (1) movements called for by the scenario, or more simply, the movements and actions required by the players to obtain the necessary action; (2) camera angles. These fundamentals can be made clear by drawing a plan on sectional ruled drawing paper, divided into 1/12th squares, each square representing one inch.

## Set Layout

Our stage measures 20 ft. by 18 ft., and this size must first be marked out on the sectional paper. Inside the area marked out we lay out the set-plan called for by the scenario. On the left we require an alleyway. For this 4 ft. is allowed, giving the first wall of the set. To the right we require a back kitchen, allowing 5 ft. for this section, giving a length of 11 ft. for the main kitchen set.

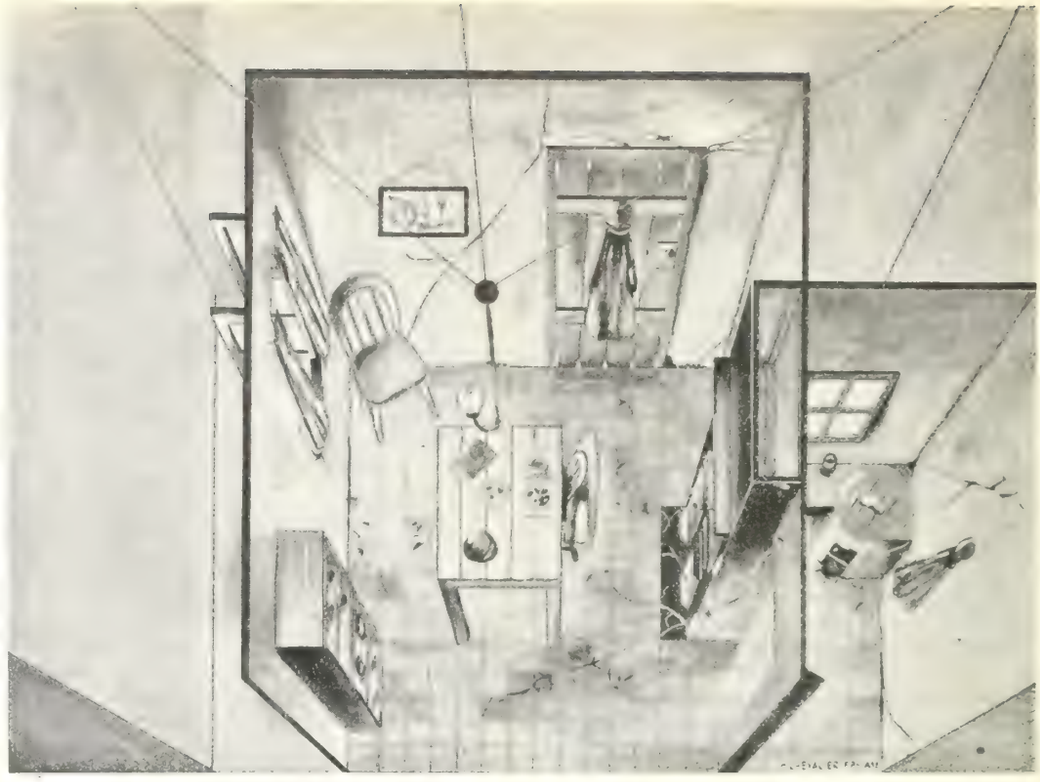
Allowing for camera room, the width of the kitchen cannot be greater than 12 ft., for we have to take into consideration space for the actors entering the kitchen from the street. Having fixed the dimensions, the next step is roughing in the furniture required—not very elaborate in this case—consisting of two chairs, a table, and three boxes for shelves.

## Camera Angles

Working out camera angles is rather more difficult than is sometimes appreciated, if a breakaway from flat, uninteresting angles is to be made. Reading from the script, we find our picture opens with a close shot of a player sitting at the table eating. The door opens and two men enter and converse with the player, who calls his wife from the back kitchen. Sounds simple enough, but we must make the scene move, otherwise the whole thing will be flat. Commencing at part A*, we shoot a close-up of the player eating. Tracking back to B and panning over to the sound accompaniment of a door closing, we reveal two men standing by the door. As they approach the table we pull back to C, a position allowing a pan over to pick up the wife working in the back kitchen, and her entry into the kitchen when called.

The moment she passes the door we track into D, tracking into B again when she picks up the teapot from the kitchen range and pours out a cup of tea at the table. The remainder of the scene is played from this point, for the only movement to the left is a pan shot following one of the men to the window and back again.

*See illustrations on p. 47.



**Kitchen Set, $\frac{1}{2}$" Scale**

In the final sequence the angles are quite different—avoiding an error, too often apparent in amateur films, namely using the same shots twice. This is not only bad technically, but reveals to the people who see the film how little you understand their mentality, for they can spot those duplicated shots with ease.

For the last shots, then, we start at A with a close-up of the player taking money out of a cocoa tin on the shelf at the left. Tracking back to B, we pan with him as he walks to the table, picking up his wife standing on the other side of the table.

From this position we are able to see the door flung open and two men enter and walk towards the table. We have a new set-up from here, taking the camera into the back kitchen, point C, where we can take the two plain clothes men hiding behind the wall and a long shot of the players trying to make a get-away through the window, followed by the plain clothes men. We again have a new set up at D by the door, to take the plain clothes men appearing at the window and preventing the players from escaping. This, followed by the entry of other officers through the front door, and the fight that takes place subsequently.

With the angles worked out the rest is simple calculation. The amount of set required, the width of door openings, window position, and the removable walls required are automatically decided for us, so we can proceed to build the set.

## Building the Set

In building this set, allowance must be made for revamping or alterations, as the script calls for four other settings: a police station, the steel mill manager's office, a hotel bedroom and a village pub. That sounds a great deal more difficult than it really is, for all we require are sectional walls using the various sections in different combinations.

The walls are of hessian, stretched on a framework made from rough 2 in. by 2 in. deal battens set up as follows. The left hand wall, section A (see key plan), will be a frame measuring 7 ft. long by 9 ft. high. The window section, B, will be a plywood section, 2 ft. by 9 ft., with the window frame made up from prepared 2 in. by 1 in. deal nailed together, fitted with hinges to open and close. Section C and D, measuring 3 ft. by 9 ft. and 6 ft. 9 in. by 9 ft. respectively, are again hessian on deal frames.

The door section, E, is constructed from three-ply with a door frame of 3 in. by 2 in. prepared deal. The door itself, 3 ft. by 6 ft. 6 in., can either be an old door off a shed or some such structure, or made up from $\frac{1}{2}$-in. matching with the cross battens of 3 in. by 1 in. prepared deal. A cheap lock, preferably second-hand, will complete this part.

Section F, 4 ft. by 9 ft. is again hessian on deal framing, and this also applies to the upper section of the kitchen range above the mantle board. The range itself is constructed from plywood and prepared deal, copying near enough the general lines of a kitchen range, an oven on the left, fire in the centre, and hob on the right. Both side walls are plywood, while the back is filled with hessian (this for the reverse shot, C, final sequence).

For the opening, cross-wall and upright, J, hessian can again be used, while the back kitchen wall, H, can be hessian with a window frame of prepared 2 in. by 2 in. deal let in. The copper is plywood and $\frac{1}{2}$ in. matching, the sink and draining board $\frac{1}{2}$ in. matching. Cover the side wall of the kitchen range nearest the open side of the set and the copper front with a thin coating of plaster of paris, marking in the cracks carefully. These are seen at fairly close range and will otherwise show up badly, while the back kitchen side wall, I, is also hessian on deal framing, tight up against the wall of the stage. The walls are then covered with the cheapest and most gaudy wallpaper possible, fixed with a good size paste direct on the hessian, leaving the range side wall covered with plaster unpapered. Mark out the cracks on the walls when dry with cheap brown oil paint. This will run slightly on the wallpaper, and the oil will give greasy marks, just what are required.

## How to Build a Set (cont.)

Next, mix some whitewash or ceiling white and spray the top wall sections with a thin coat, trailing it down towards the floor in the corners. This will impart a damp appearance to the walls. Follow this by tearing the paper in places, be careful to tear the paper from the top downwards and leave the torn piece hanging, spraying the hessian revealed with dirty grey whitewash.

Paint the door and window frame with dark grey paint, the range a dull black, touching up the oven door-knob and ash-pit cover-knob (if any) with light grey.

Then comes the floor. This can be covered with cheap lino having a tile pattern, then scratched to represent cracks, the scratches darkened with paint, and the gloss removed with a thin coat of medium grey, or alternatively manufactured as in the studios. For this method, cover the floor with hessian stretched tight and nailed down along the edges with large headed nails or tacks. Brown paper is then pasted over the top and painted with the required pattern and varnished with copal varnish. The question is one of personal choice.

For the cross shot of the door and window the 3 ft. panel, E, is removed and as the door opens inwards revealing the space outside, a black curtain is stretched taut against the back studio wall. For those who wish to produce a foggy effect, stretch a grey gauze about 1 ft. 6 in. in front of the black curtain, and back light it. Outside the window duplicate the curtain, and if used, the gauze.

Lighting is largely a matter of personal taste, but there are several fundamentals to watch. First the scene must be lighted in a low key, keeping to the atmosphere associated mentally with a house of this type where the only illumination is gas. Handle your lighting as in the picture on the cover of this month's technical section, but lighting in a slightly higher key than that particular example.

Put some well diffused light on the back walls, and use fairly heavy diffusion on the camera if the scene is a foggy one. If a fire is wanted, place a photoflood light behind a couple of thicknesses of gauze and one or two small pieces of dark paper between, to give the broken effect of a coal fire.

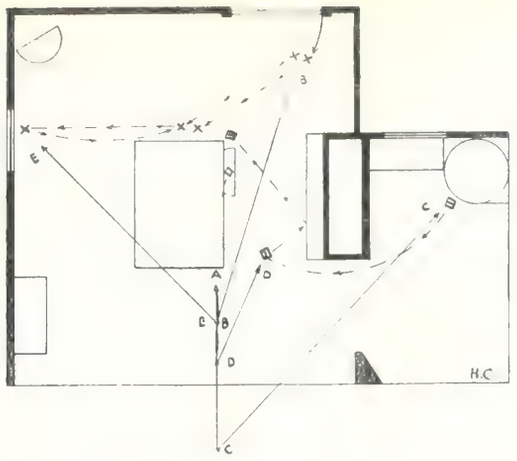
As a general rule, try to balance the lighting so that the highlights receive slightly less than twice the light of the shadow side. In some cases, with super fast film, it may be safe to increase this amount slightly. In cases as the above, expose for the shadows, and if the light is properly balanced, the highlights will be all right.

When tracking from a close shot, mount a lamp on the camera dolly, dimming the light by one half when close in, increasing the intensity as you pull back. Never use the same lamps to illuminate the characters and the background, otherwise you will have well-lit people moving against an under-exposed background. Shadows are necessary so don't get panicky and avoid them, for without shadows one cannot perceive the highlights, thus both are necessary to the success of the picture.

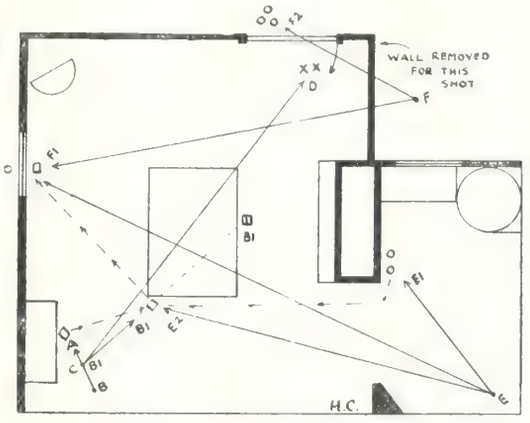
Super Sensitive Panchromatic film should be used for these shots, with the highlights preferably from Photoflood lamps.

Next month the details of revamping the set for the police station, hotel bedroom, village pub, and steel mill manager's office will be dealt with.

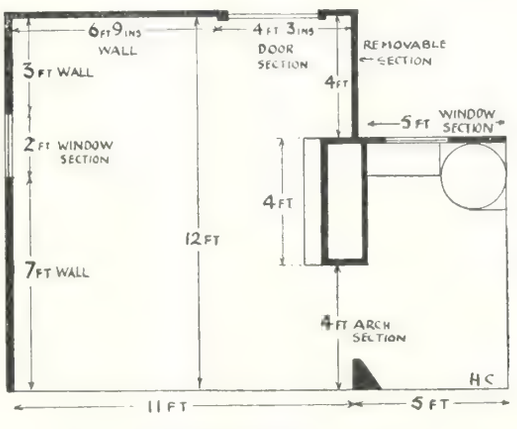
Any questions or criticisms about this series will be welcomed and answered.




**(1) Opening sequence camera angles. Scale $\frac{3}{8}$" - 1 ft.**




**(2) Closing sequence camera angles. Scale $\frac{3}{8}$" - 1 ft.**




**(3) Key plan. Scale $\frac{3}{8}$" - 1 ft.**

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**Notes :**

The human eye is so sensitive that it can differentiate a variation in illumination intensity of the order of about the constant fraction of 0.01.

Well, what of it? Only this: don't be misled by the salesman's lumen story, judge the light from a projector by comparison with another, and take the best.

* * * *

Speaking of light, a new condenser will shortly be available in this country for use with the B. & H. 16 mm. machines, known as the "Magnilite." It will increase the projection illumination by 35 per cent and simply slides into the existing auxiliary slot in the condenser housing chamber.

## *Use of Kodachrome in Daylight*

Your correspondent, J. Masterton, in the May issue of *W.F.N.*, expresses an opinion that the average amateur does not use artificial light when using Kodachrome *owing to the high cost*, and is therefore forced to rely on daylight.

I have to join issue with him on these points, as my experience has been that the 'average amateur' will probably use his first film of Kodachrome in daylight, but after seeing the processed film, will immediately decide that in future he will use Kodachrome 'A' in artificial light, as he will then have the lighting under local control, and it is possible to film quite satisfactorily using four Photofloods in reflectors—the cost of which would only be 30*s*.

Using Kodachrome in daylight calls for much experience, either in judging exposures—even with the aid of the Kodachrome charts—or the intelligent use of an exposure meter, and even then one cannot just point the meter at the subject and, having obtained the setting of the diaphragm, just fire away. It's not so simple as that. One must—if one requires correct colour renderings—take readings from all the variously coloured surfaces and, providing the readings are within reasonably small limits, decide on a mean aperture.

However, one rarely encounters that state of affairs, it being more normal for one to find tremendous variations, a case in point being the recent Coronation decorations. Here one is confronted with blue and red giving two entirely different readings, and the white high lights which will give a reading in no way comparable to the blue and red readings.

I would venture to suggest that more than half the colour films of the Coronation decorations have the same characteristic fault, viz., reds a muddy brown, and blues "washed out," with the whites absolutely devoid of detail.

I have found—by experiment and observation—that the tendency with exterior Kodachrome film is under-exposure and lack of colour planning. Why will some people try to take a girl with, say, a dark blue jacket, white jumper, grey skirt, "pink and white" complexion, red lipstick and "blonde" hair, sitting on a green lawn nursing a black and tan puppy, and then grumble if they don't get correct rendering of all the colours.

It just can't be done. The results have to be seen to be believed and, as on an average day the light conditions are constantly variable, a successful shot is more luck than judgment.

For general exterior work—providing exaggerated contrasts are avoided—I have found that the following film speeds are suitable for exposure meter settings when using Kodachrome film.

| *Meter Type* | *Weston Universal Model 650* | *Bewi Photoskop Tempophot Tempiphot* | *Ivo Hod Drinsen Hod* | *Electro-drem* | *Zeiss Helios Bleiduex Sixtus Quitrux* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Meter Speed Settings | 4 | 15 | 200 | 21 | 18 |

GEORGE R. COOPER

# BOOK REVIEWS

**FOOTNOTES TO THE FILM,** edited by Charles Davy. With 32 illustrations. (Lovat Dickson, 18*s*.)

"How much I like films I like—but I could like films better. I like being distracted, flattered, tickled, even rather upset—but I should not mind something more; I should like something serious. I should like to be changed by more films, as art can change one: I should like something to happen when I go to the cinema." So ends Elizabeth Bowen's no-brow expression of why she goes to the cinema, what she likes and what she would like to have the opportunity of liking. And what she would like to like, the film makers who contribute to this book would, with one accord, like to be allowed to give her. They too would like something to happen to the cinema. Hitchcock would like to be allowed, just for once, to finish a film the way he conceived it, make a film that was too terrifying for some audiences, meet to-morrow half a dozen people who could write good stories for British films. Donat, Graham Greene and Basil Dean, too, diagnose this lack as one of the prime causes of our present discontents.

Additional to the individual interest of the several contributions to this book is the agreement—sometimes expressed in almost identical phrases—between the authors, although so far as one can judge, they were not attempting to write to a common theme. Between Hitchcock, Wright and Betjeman on the use of the camera and its relation to the settings and the actors. Between them and Donat and Basil Dean on the relation of cinema to the stage. Between these five and Jaubert and Paul Nash, writing on the proper use of music and colour. Between all of these and Grierson, producer and director, Graham Greene, story writer and critic, and Bernstein, exhibitor, on the proper subject matter of the cinema and the insane neglect by the modern cinema as a whole, and most of all in the British film studios, of "fresh air and real people."

That something could happen in the cinema these writers would almost persuade us. That such "somethings" have happened they remind us. Chaplin, Griffith, Clair and Disney have been; we have seen *Nanook*, *Caligari*, *Mr. Deeds*, *Pasteur*, *Night Mail* and *The March of Time*. These and others, from Lumière who was in the beginning to *The Good Earth*, have shown how the cinema might become, as Charles Davy puts it, "an art realistic, poetic and popular—realistic in its subject-matter, poetic in its final utterance and popular in its range of appeal." But Lord Tyrrell says "No controversy" and Big Business says, "It's not Box-Office." What is to break the power of the "artifices, inhibitions, inferiorities, snobberies, censorships, alien controls and misguided party-political interventions" which cramp the development of the British cinema to-day? It might be Korda if his visions and good intentions were tempered with that practical sense which Maurice Kann says Hollywood has and Shepherd's Bush lacked. It might be the film critics if they were as free from inhibitions, cant and corruption as Alistair Cooke would have them. It might be the public itself if censorship could be circumvented, if only as Cavalcanti suggests in comedies, if Film Societies had the freedom Forsyth Hardy claims for them; if every exhibitor tried as hard as Bernstein to understand and serve his patrons.

One hope above all others there should be—in the schools and educational institutions throughout Great Britain. There by the use of educational films and by placing film appreciation on a level with dramatic, literary and musical appreciation, could be trained the desire for realism, truth, and beauty which would make worth while films commercially worth while. But when you read R. S. Lambert's account of the present neglect of this opportunity you may still wonder if you will live to see the day when something happens when you go to the cinema.

This book should and ought to be widely read and enjoyed. It is a pity that its price should suggest that its contents are for the few.

WILLIAM FARR

**ELEPHANT DANCE,** by Frances Flaherty. (Faber and Faber, 12s. 6d. net).

The letterpress of this book consists chiefly of a series of epistles from Mrs. Flaherty to her children during the production of *Elephant Boy* in India. The intimacy of the style will please some and embarrass others, but the information given is frequently of extreme interest, and never more so than when descriptions are given of such things as the filming of the keddah, or the madness of Kala Nag.

Most people, however, will value the book for its seventy superb illustrations from the camera of Mrs. Flaherty or her daughter. These have the genuine quality of India, and most of them are masterly examples of camera technique. The book is well got up and the reproduction values excellent. C.M.

**AMATEUR MOVIES AND HOW TO MAKE THEM,** by Alex Strasser (The Studio, 7s. 6d.).

In a series of *How To Do It* books published by The Studio, there has been issued recently a book telling amateurs how to make films.

In this delightfully illustrated book, Mr. Strasser touches on all the problems facing amateurs when they begin to use a camera. Along technical lines nothing is missed. Detailed explanations of how and what to do are given on all subjects from lenses and filters, to gauzes and colour photography. Fine pictures illustrate the points made by Mr. Strasser, the difference between a two-inch and three-inch lens, for instance, and the various circles of interest within any given subject.

Any amateur who really studies this book should surely avoid wastage of film and time, and many disappointments. E.S.

**THE COMPLETE PROJECTIONIST** (Odham's Technical Press, 5s. 4d. post free).

In this second and revised edition of *The Complete Projectionist*, by R. H. Cricks, F.R.P.S., the amateur cinematographer has a wealth of valuable information.

Some twenty-two chapters deal with every phase of the reproduction side of cinematography from simple optical principals to television.

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# world FILM news

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**KENSAL HOUSE** Here is something entirely new in England. It is a model housing estate, complete with Nursery School and Tenants' Club, designed by five eminent architects. There are delightful pictures of the children in the Nursery School. Some of the tenants describe what life is like there and show you round the flats.

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**MILK COOKERY** With a talented cow

*Anyone who would like a film show arranged, or who wishes to borrow copies of the films, should write to the British Commercial Gas Association, 1 Grosvenor Place, S.W.1, if outside London, or the Gas Light and Coke Company, Horseferry Road, S.W.1, for London*

# *Realist Film Unit*

# Realist Film Unit

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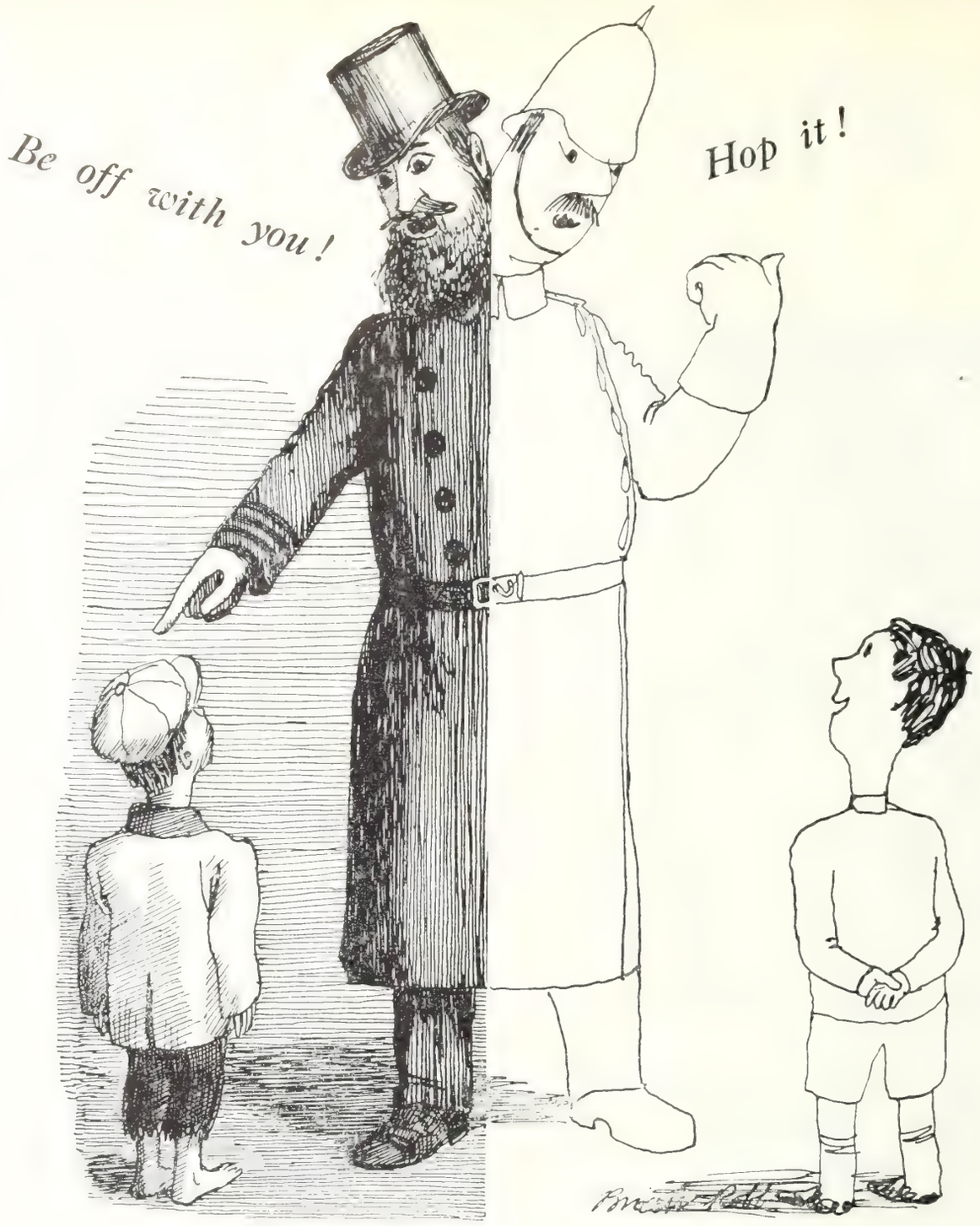


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(INCORPORATING CINEMA QUARTERLY)

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# THE REASON I'M GOOD — I go to the pictures

## MAX MILLER TALKS TO HARRY WATT

"Good evening, Mr. Miller," I said . . . .

"Which do I prefer? Films or this? This, of course, because you get your laughs, see. You can wait for your laughs. If you don't get your laughs you can gag. You know, put across something. In a film you put 'em across cold. But it's all right afterwards. You can sit back comfortable and see the boy's good. It's funny how different your voice sounds on the film though, ain't it? The first time I heard it my stomach went like that. Yes, like that. Honest. I said 'that ain't me.' But it was. Like that my stomach was going.

"No, but I reckon we ought to copy the Americans. Why? Because they know how to put over a gag. If it's a good one, they chuck it over natural like and have another ready behind it.

"The reason I'm good is I go to the pictures. Never labour a gag, I say. Some English comedians are so pleased with a good gag that they make it an act. I'm always looking for gags. I'm a good comic because I live at Brighton. I try all my gags on the boys on the train. If an English comic lives in London he goes to bed at three and gets up at four the next day. If the wife's out, he's got no one to try his gags on.

"The director? He's got to know your type of stuff. I've had some—I said I wouldn't do it anymore—but Bill Beaudine, he's all right—he's an American, see—so he knows comedy. He comes to me and says, 'Here's the lines for the next bit, Max.' And maybe I say, 'They stink, Bill. How about me taking a cup of coffee and working out a few gags?' And if he likes them they're all right, see. But if he says 'No' then they're out. He's American, see.

"That's right. Always must have pathos. There's a boxer in my last picture—big he was, like that—I treat him like a baby. Honest, just like a baby. But I wouldn't play with kids in a picture. Always steal the picture they do. Might as well let them have the picture and get on with it.

"The first film I did was *The Good Companions*. 'It's a nice little part, Max,' they said. I was playing Birmingham that week. I dropped in on the Sunday and walked right on and did the bit. Music plugger I was. Twenty minutes it took me. Like the Americans, see. Just work your gags natural and easy. And reckon on your audiences getting the point. The trouble with English comics is that they think they've got to repeat a gag ten times before the audience catches on, see. The Americans know that if a gag doesn't catch first time, it's a lousy gag. So they've got another one ready.

"Yes, I know I'm an English comedian, but I use the American style. You've got to nowadays. English humour's out of date. It creaks. I get more ideas for gags talking to an American for five minutes than to an Englishman for five hours. The Americans know all the answers. They're quick, see. They're funny even when they're not trying to be. They're alive.

"Of course there's a future for British comedies. But they must move fast. And none of this la-di-da stuff. Big laugh in *Educated Evans* was when I was sitting with a posh girl—all dressed up she was—and the waiter says 'Dinner is served.' 'Put it back in the oven, I'm not ready,' I says. Real high society it was. But I brought it down to earth. Real life stuff you want, of real people. Like you and me, see. Well, I've got to see a man round the front of the house. Why don't you drop in and see the show next week, chum? Good-night, pal."

"Good-night, Max," I said.

"Crooks . . .

# ARMAMENT RINGS ASSASSINS AND POLITICAL MADMEN

Our major national problems as seen in British Films by

## Russell Ferguson

OUR national life, as reflected in British films, is full of interesting features. We are a nation of retired business men, mill owners, radio singers, actors, detectives, newspapermen, leading ladies, soldiers, secret service men, crooks, smugglers, and international jewel thieves.

Some of us are only waiters, boxers, chemists, and brilliant young inventors, but the national custom of marrying our employers' daughters may be relied upon to remedy this.

Some of us, indeed, are only poor village blacksmiths, but there is no reason to be ashamed of this, for we have millionaire sons in the background. The majority of us move in society.

One thing is quite clear. We don't work in coal pits or fishing boats or shops or shipyards or iron foundries, and that is something to be thankful for.

We have our servants and employees of course, upon whom we rely for most of our national humour. Not that we do not have a good deal of fun ourselves, sometimes, at house parties or the like, dressing up in other people's clothes, or being mistaken for somebody else, but we do not have a great deal of time for that sort of thing, because mostly we are in trouble with new plays that won't go, or documents that have been stolen, or murders that we didn't commit, or stolen jewels, or international complications.

With all this on our minds, it is little wonder that we are not a humorous nation. Fortunately, our butlers, chauffeurs, bus drivers and waitresses compensate to some extent for this, with their quaint vulgarities. They do not have so much to think about.

When it is not worry, it is love that keeps us from joking. Apart from hotel adventures which are scarcely worthy of the name of love, our affairs are pretty serious. Of course, our bus drivers have their women folks, and our waitresses can be seen occasionally making sheep's eyes at men, but such people are usually married already, and talk about their "old man" or their "old woman" as such people will. In any case their affairs are not to be considered serious, for it is a well-established principle in this country that love is not really love at all unless it is expressed in cultured tones.

Some seniors among us, Lancashire mill owners and Scottish bankers and so on have not lost our rough provincial tongues, but in such circumstances we send our children to school so that when they grow up they will be able to make love to each other in pleasant accents. Otherwise we should die out.

Our troubles are really endless. Happily, we are not bothered with unemployment, malnutrition, distressed areas, disease, or poverty, but the number of chemical formulæ, state documents and bonds that are stolen every year is most distressing, and thousands of pounds worth of jewels are constantly going astray. Then there are business rivalries to think about, and continual murders, and crooks from America. These are our major national problems.

We are fortunate in having a wonderful army, in which all the soldiers are very happy and contented, and enjoy themselves thoroughly, at least until they are killed. Our fighting navy is equally grand, quelling South Americans with hardly any losses. By a long-established national custom, all naval and military battles result in a wedding.

Our foreign affairs on the whole are very serene. Our greatest trouble is spies and fanatics, who threaten from time to time to blow up London, or to bring down all the machines at Hendon with death rays. There has been a great deal of this in recent months. Where the emissaries and agents come from is not always very clear, but it is certain that they are active enough.

Encouraged by a partial success early in the year, when a bomb intended for Piccadilly tube station blew up in a West End street, the spies and agents of foreign powers have been hard at it ever since with clocks and bombs and rays and wireless-controlled planes. London has escaped by a series of miracles.

What with armament rings, assassins and political madmen, it is a mercy that a good proportion of our population are in the Secret Service.

. . . and business men"

# EDITORIAL

## *Projecting Britain*

THE ORGANISATION BY the Travel and Industrial Association of a service of British films to oversea countries, is a departure of first-class importance. Mr. Elton in his discussion of the work on another page, rightly emphasises the remarkable feat of building up a circulation in twenty-eight different countries. The Association has clearly become a leading force in that projection of Britain which Sir Stephen Tallents called for so eloquently seven years ago.

Like all cultural propaganda, the work of the Travel and Industrial Association has been sorely restricted by lack of adequate funds and support. Though a protégé of the Department of Overseas Trade, its grant from the Government is discouragingly small for really effective operations. Though supplements to this grant come from national interests and public corporations, these vary so considerably as to keep the Association in a perpetual state of uncertainty. These are not perhaps ideal conditions for cultural work on an international scale. It is remarkable that in spite of these difficulties, the basic machinery for the showing of the face of Britain abroad should have been created.

With the Foreign Office restive under the effect of anti-British propaganda, it would appear less than wise to content ourselves with political protest. A more considered and positive policy has become necessary. From the point of view of British Government and British commerce, some might even hold that the matter is an urgent one. The machinery lies to our hand, and in no branch of cinema have our producers shown themselves so competent as in the production of those descriptive films which would help in the task. The occasion calls for a constructive policy under which more films can be made and a distribution system adequate to so high a purpose created. With the disappointment of the Coronation from an international point of view upon us, with intelligent French observers criticising our British Pavilion at the Paris Exhibition, it is not good enough, for example, that the grants to the Foreign Office and Overseas Trade Departments for cultural relations should be rather less than it takes to build a small theatre in a provincial town.

## *Wanted, Writers*

FROM THE PRODUCERS of documentary films comes the complaint that there is in Britain to-day a dearth of descriptive writers. The novelists, say the film people, are too diffuse and unfactual; the journalists, though analytical and precise, have been too closely schooled in the avoidance of theme for them to invest their stories with either drama or importance. It would seem that a new horizon opens before the young writer, and that the achievements of the realist film makers might be matched in a new species of descriptive writing. The essentials are a regard for facts, the ability to carry facts on the wings of narrative, a sense of the drama inherent in facts and the power to bring the observation of fact to an issue.

The concern of the film makers is, we suspect, largely prompted by the success of *March of Time*. Though in Britain its film values are not highly regarded, its journalistic power is a matter for envy and imitation. No one cares who shoots the film but everyone would like to catch the secret of Larsen and De Rochemont, the two men who are responsible for writing it.

With Russia succeeding so well in the simplification of economics and mechanics and America on top of the world in the dramatic description of public affairs, it is obviously time that we remembered our own tradition of Defoe. Mr. Baldwin maintained the other day that the weakness of our time was a weakness in poets. For poets read commentators and remember the B.B.C. as well as the cinema.

## *O them Llamas!*

THE LLAMA IS A graceful animal. We are reminded of this by the fate of our last number, which carried on its front a high-standing and even good looking example of the species. To make sentimental appeal an infant llama was attached to the foreground. From many quarters we have received congratulations on our llamas. WORLD FILM NEWS—so it has been interpreted—has abandoned the vulgar display of such film stars as Garbo and Laurel and Hardy, and is now, by evidence of the llamas, in full and highbrow pursuit of the arts.

While never averse to admiration on the part of our readers, the analysis is false. Llamas are graceful animals and in a general way, but like many immature aesthetes they are not exciting in detail. According to medical testimony their legacy to humanity is not distinguished. In any case we do not serve art by pretty pictures on the cover, but by fighting for art in the more arduous pages within. And we are not forgetful of our responsibilities to art when we dive headlong into the maelstrom of film politics and say our say about film finance, censorship and quota. We serve the art of cinema the better, or so we think, by coming down from llamic heights to the dust of the market place. We hope our readers will follow us in this distinction. There is much to create and we are not going to do it by getting excited over llamas, however graceful.

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## *Bronchos and Blondes*

FEW GENTLEMEN prefer blondes to bronchos, and Hollywood despite ephemeral successes in other *genres*, has never yet discovered a more satisfactory kind of picture than that in which all the characters—except the silvery haired old mother, who stayed at home graciously shooting Indians with a musket—used periodically to gallop down a precipice in a heavy downpour of black rain. It is true that recent cowboy films have shown a slight tendency to degeneracy. Horses, for one thing, have lost that wonderful turn of speed they used to have in the old silent days, and nowadays, even when extended, rarely go faster on the films than they do in real life. Hollywood is badly mistaken if it imagines that this concession to a pedantic naturalism pleases the public taste; we were brought up on horses which could do their seventy or eighty m.p.h. with ease over very bad going indeed, and those are the kind of horses that we like.

A more obvious and therefore less insidious symptom of decay is the intrusion of crooning into the great open spaces. On the range, in the saloon, and even sometimes among the wigwams and tepees, both paleface and redskin have formed the wholly regrettable habit of bursting at frequent intervals into song, and song of a painfully sentimental kind. This will not do. A Red Indian is not there to utter love-calls, but to use his tomahawk like a man until retribution overtakes him (which it does partly on account of his villainy, but chiefly because of his passion for standing silhouetted on sky-lines, an easy target for the hero, even at the customary range of two and a half miles). It is high time Hollywood stopped mixing melody with mustangs, and it is to be hoped that the cowboys will take advantage of their improved economic position to remedy the abuses which beset their calling. At the same time it must be understood that there is to be no nonsense about the heroine, who is still just as good as she ever was and in no need of reform. Let no impious hand ruffle those golden locks which escaped disarray even at moments when she could hardly call her scalp her own. Let no one curb her impulse to throw open the log-cabin door to masked and hooded strangers when she has been left alone. Let no one suggest that when thrown into a torrent she ought to get wet or that when flung over a cliff she might be expected to suffer abrasions. Let no one change anything about her. For many of us—as she stands in her simple Paris dress gazing wistfully out across the prairie, waiting for somebody to knock her down and bind her hand and foot—for many of us she is the woman of our dreams.

—*Editorial in The [illegible]*

# Acting for Stage and Screen

"Robert Donat is brilliant" wrote A. G. MacDonell, reviewing "Footnotes to the Film" for the Sunday Observer. We are glad to print here an extract from Robert Donat's chapter in this book for the benefit of our readers.

MORE daft remarks are made in defence of the theatre and the cinema than in any other cause. Why should I defend the cinema, which has borrowed so blatantly from the theatre and is so slavishly dependent on it for new recruits? We are apt to forget that even the picture-frame of the cinema screen is pinched directly from the modern picture-frame stage.

And the theatre? The theatre, of course, has been in the throes of death ever since films began—and earlier. Silent films having failed in the extermination, talkies were invented to deal the death blow. And now television prepares its fatal draught. Meanwhile the theatre, announcing its Positively Farewell Performances, is crammed to bursting point just as often as the fare it proffers proves irresistible to a wayward public.

For myself, I shall return to the stage as often as a good play comes my way. The trouble is, good scenarios are far more plentiful than good plays—by which I mean good entertainment; and I am not ashamed of being voted at the box-office as a good entertainer. In seven years the theatre has offered me one great play, half a dozen possible plays, two exciting gambles and innumerable duds. Until something really exciting comes along, I go on making films—and enjoy making them enormously. I make my film, seeing it grow day by day until it is finished; then I have shot my bolt and I can look around for new doors to fasten. On the stage one has to try to shoot the same bolt eight times a week for as long as the damn door will remain on its hinges. Few plays are worth that dreadful grind. One of our finest actors recently complained of being in a state of coma towards the end of a run; is it to be wondered that after 400 performances he found it just too hard a wick to keep alight? Even our own Noel Coward collapses after two short seasons playing in some of the most delightful theatricalities ever produced.

There is a certain snobbery among stage actors where filming is concerned; they look upon it as a rather boring, well-paid joke. Their performances in front of the camera, if also rather boring, are not quite so much of a joke. They give rise to the oft-repeated cry: "Where *are* our actors?" Then, too late, they discover they have not gone quite the right way about it. Instead of just acting "a little less" they find out that they must try to act a little better. That is why actors who are successful both on stage and screen are few and far between. It is a very serious business, but increasingly fascinating and worth while.

A stock question is: "What is the difference between Stage Acting and Screen Acting—and which is the more difficult?" I am always inclined to be impatient with this query and reply: "Well, you've paid to see them both, haven't you noticed?" Wouldn't you feel a little annoyed, dear reader, if asked: "How do toffee apples compare with apple fritters?" The only sensible answer is that toffee and puddings cannot be compared—my point being that, ideally, the cinema cannot demand the same as the theatre. "The cinema can do what the theatre cannot do." This is the champion goat-getter where I am concerned; it is about as bright and useful as comparing the flute to the Mighty Wurlitzer.

I am not belittling the progress of the cinema; in terms of sheer improvement—mere technical *advance*—the industry has much to crow about. But its technique is limited and I would remind you of that. Speed sometimes describes circles and does not travel very far. The cinema, as a technique, has travelled quite far enough and is in fine fettle for the artist now. But "Amazing Technical Resources" is just so much bunk. Ever thought about it? The whole history of the cinema can boast no greater triumph than the theatre's achievement of running *Cavalcade* at Drury Lane for eleven months. It has done similar things, but nothing better. It has wielded larger crowds and used bigger lifts and rotated greater weights and lowered and lifted larger curtains, but what else? The theatre has had water tanks for years. The one into which my double dived in *Monte Cristo* was bigger and deeper and had a glass side, but these are gadgets which the theatre has long since scrapped. Nothing will ever erase from my memory the impression of Red Indian after Red Indian in canoe after canoe coming down a water spout as steep as the side of a house at the Manchester Hippodrome. I have seen Niagara on the screen several times since then; comparatively it left me cold.

What can be said of an infant still perversely sprawling in the cradle it has long since outgrown? The cinema has not chosen its own way of life, like the ultra-modern child at the ultra-modern school. Oh dear, no. It has suffered the most rigorous discipline, the sternest of all restrictions—commercialisation. No child has covered so much ground and progressed so little. In its forty years it has created and discarded a score of fashions but has left us no traditions. Yet the prodigy is so promising we are at a loss which school to put it to! A difficult child, born dumb, it suddenly acquired the gift of speech after thirty years.

When we consider it, this amazing creature has got away with a good deal. Do you realise that quite a good proportion of the early antics were not photographed at all, simply because the cameras could not record them? A merciful thing in some ways, though an alarming idea for the actor to swallow, and rather a shock for the public, too; they were not getting anything like one hundred per cent of the performance they were paying to see. For years it gave us nothing more or less than conventionalised grimaces based on an alleged emotion which it would be insincere to describe by any other name than "Lurve," and the old stock-in-trade of Melodrama (still its strongest card). Direction was often so inexact that when the hero was supposed to be saying, "Darling, I love you," in actuality he was probably murmuring, "I think you're lousy." By degrees the film-makers rediscovered cruelty, and the public licked its chops over voluptuousness. Then Grief stepped in in the form of Glycerine. I have no statistics, but it would take the needs of a world war to compete with the quantity that coursed its milky way from the stars. Bill Hart alone—dear William S.—must have kept one factory going.

## Comedy in Mime

Then Laughter, holding both its sides, and painfully grimacing under the onslaught of property cream puffs, suddenly held its breath to see a pair of big splayed boots, trousers, a bowler hat and a cane syncopate their impudent and irresistible way while the world discovered Comedy in Mime. Charles Chaplin, the first great artist of the silent screen and the only one to keep its peace, was bred on the English music-hall stage. He is still far and away the greatest of all screen actors and the only legitimate reason for ever permitting the cinema to subsidise the theatre—as a thank-offering. Then suddenly someone thought of Thought, and everyone was stumped. Nobody had thought of thinking in those days. They had simply Gone After Things in a Big Way. Sometimes, alas, they had Got what they had Gone After. What in hell did Thought look like? And everyone wore a puzzled frown. So Thought, in the form of a puzzled frown, made its bow on the screen. For years and years film actors frowned and puckered their brows and looked slightly constipated and you just knew they were thinking.

Face-pulling gradually gave place to something even more dangerous—the Art of Facial Expression. A popular post-war encyclopedia had a page of photographs illustrating this. Love, Hate, Fear, Doubt, Grief, and so on. It was a good example of its own futility; you cannot label these emotions any more than you can learn them by imitation. Once the titles were covered up the fun began! At a guess, Doubt looked perilously like Love; Grief—just acute disappointment; Fear merely surprise, and I should be accused of extreme vulgarity were I to tell you what Hate looked like. That is why few of the old silent pictures can stand the test to-day; we find them unconvincing and often extremely funny.

## A face helps

There is no such thing as Facial Expression, but there is such a thing as an expressive face. An expressive face helps to convey by natural means the messages of the artist's heart and mind; *helps*—but it cannot tell the whole story. Witness the celebrated wooden-faced comedian who, for some lamentable and apparently unaccountable reason, seldom makes pictures nowadays. Until he arrived, who would have believed that anyone could have achieved screen fame by the deliberate avoidance of facial expression? It is the eyes and the voice that matter most.

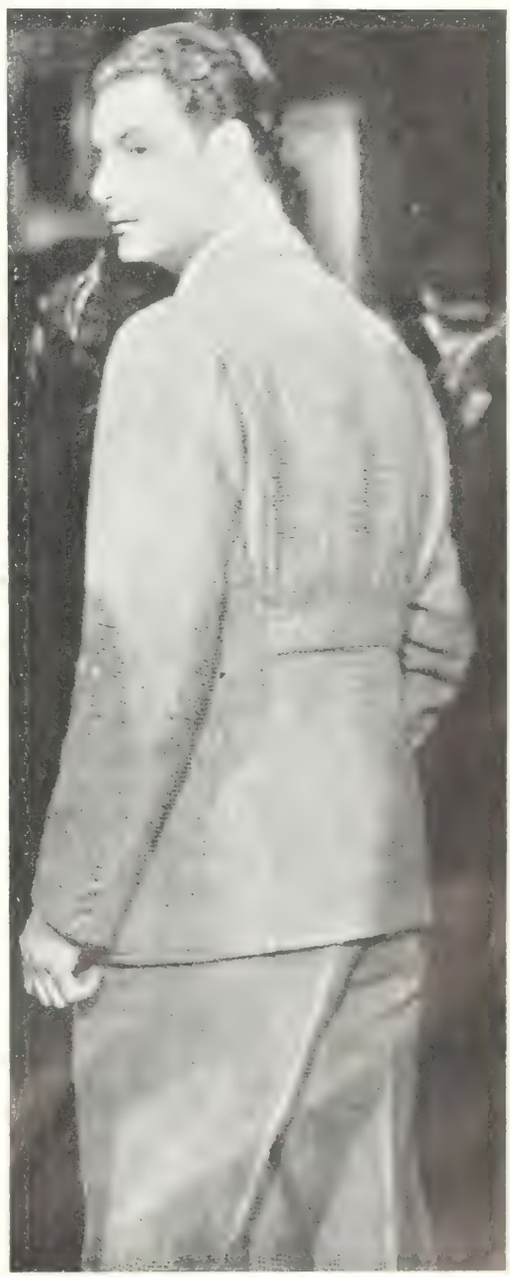
"Facial" expression is only skin deep; it is superficial and therefore insincere. Your bad actor (invariably a lazy one) visualises surprise, for example, in terms of lifted eyebrows, quivering nostrils, parted lips and popping eyes . . .

Just as face-pulling twisted the silents, voice-pulling distorted the talkies—though not for long, for the very good reason that having been forced into the paths of sincerity nothing but sincerity of voice would match. Thus, by the time mechanical improvements had eliminated the tin fog-horn, the all-screeching, all-crooning, all-canoodling voice had disappeared . . .

How much further have we travelled since those days? Not so very far, really. It is true we have anchored the camera and put a faster and more delicate motor inside it and more sensitive film in the spools, and we have given the cameraman a host of novelties to play with and more suitable backgrounds to light; but fundamentally the cinema has given us nothing more than the longshot, the medium shot and the close-up, plus the variations, that a mobile camera can play.

The technical advances of the cinema simply pay tribute to the age-old leadership of craftsmen in every art. It is always the craftsmen who achieve things. Only the competitive stresses of a great industry could have produced such giant technical strides. The craftsmanship of the chemical laboratory and the camera factory is no whit less highly skilled than the craftsmanship of the medieval wood-carver. The technique of the gear cutter and lens-maker puts the technique of the average actor to shame. I believe it was Sir Nigel Playfair who once said that if the theatre gave him an occasional success and an occasional cigar, what more could one expect or deserve? Must we belittle the cinema because its craftsmen can sometimes afford champagne as well?

We do not really begin to progress until we have the courage to admit and define our limitations; it is futile to pretend they do not exist. The film did not begin to realise its own possibilities until it began to forget them. Then it started throwing away its backgrounds, its crowds, its gorgeous palaces. Something more important had arrived—the scenario, or film story. Ever since that discovery we have simply been trying to tell the story better. Because the film apparently succeeded in doing the things that the stage only pretended to do, it tried to dispense with the arts of pretence altogether. Now it knows better. More and more it is finding its own level in the studio. There, the imitation can be photographed to look more convincing than the real—a paradox discovered by the theatre ages ago. Its great failing is its dangerous plasticity; it lends itself so readily to interfering fingers.



"*The Thirty-Nine Steps.*"

# "Six-Shooters" and Shakespeare

"TWO big feature films—three and a half hours of Entertainment." Analysed, it will often be found that the "two big feature films" consist of one film worthy of the name and another that fulfils its function of doubtful value by supporting the main attraction; the three and a half hours are there all right, but whether this time is taken up by Entertainment is very much open to question.

There is obviously prevalent in the Cinema industry, a curious mentality which construes quantity as being far more satisfactory than quality. Assuming that "the patron is always right" let us look at his side of the question.

I particularly wish to see *Romeo and Juliet*, and so, having paid my nimble shilling I am ushered into a darkened auditorium where I am immediately credited by a flattering management, with a mentality so flexible that it will allow of my instantaneously adapting myself to the sudden change from the outer world of realities to the lavishly embellished world of illusion.

Unfortunately for me, I find that I have been plunged right into the middle of that atrocity of atrocities, the second feature, and before I am to be allowed to enjoy that which I seek, I must endure some forty-five minutes or more of Zane Grey. Being entirely unaware as to just how long I must suffer this curious form of preparation for Shakespeare, the minutes punctuated with "O.K., Boss," and "Sharp and snappy on the draw," not only seem like hours, but enhance my sense of frustration. Fidgety and with my sense of flattery utterly vanished, I feel in no mood to absorb Shakespeare and when at last the long-awaited title is blazened upon the screen, (without a second's interval dividing the fade-out of Zane Grey and the fade-in of Shakespeare), I am ill at ease, more especially as in the first two or three minutes I have to rise from my seat and allow some ten or twelve outgoing patrons to leave.

The leaders of the rival houses shake hands and Shakespeare fades out, after demanding my concentration for over two hours. But, wait, what's this,——oh! without a moment's pause, Zane Grey is back again, and Shakespeare's King's English gives way to the strains of "I'm an old Cow Hand" played and sung by a group of what the screen tells me are "Hill Billies." The strain being too great I leave my seat and the obliging young man who has been responsible for my physical (but not mental) safety during the past three hours, informs me that I should have been in his theatre for three and a half hours, had I stayed to see the programme through.

I cannot imagine anyone wishing to read for three and a half hours, turning to the middle of a Zane Grey novel, leaving the final page, and taking up his Shakespeare which he finds far more to his taste. Shakespeare finished, he finds that he has thirty-five minutes of the period he set himself to spend in reading, so he again takes up his Zane Grey, and reading from the first page to the place where he previously commenced, rises satisfied that he has taken up the allotted time.

The cinema magnates will tell you that they endeavour to cater for all tastes. A very desirable, if difficult, aspiration—but why be so foolish as to believe themselves capable of achieving this object at one and the same time. What do I find, hundreds of would-be patrons for Paul Robeson, kept away from a local cinema, because the programme also includes a second feature starring Joe E. Brown. This, dear friends, is what is known by those highly paid Cinema Executives as "balance." The Joe E. Brown seekers are not a bit interested, in fact they are appalled at the thought of spending one hundred minutes with Robeson as a wait for their particular fancy.

Surely this form of programme building cannot be adhered to much longer—if it is, I shall not be surprised to find those responsible for the control of the "Queen's Hall" balancing their pro-

## Controversy rages over two-feature marathon programmes.

## 1937 Bernstein Questionnaire returns show majority of cinemagoers in favour. American Investigation reveals opinion changing over to favour one full-length feature only.

## Hector McCullie, managing-director of Suburban Entertainments, Ltd., tells here of experience when visiting cinema to see *Romeo and Juliet.*

grammes with Sir Henry Wood and Miss Nellie Wallace, the latter supplying the light relief calculated to make the programme attractive to all classes.

The practice of running continuous performances from 1.30 p.m. to 11 p.m. is more condemnable than commendable. The cinema controller will tell you that it allows patrons to walk in at any time convenient to themselves. The cinema is thus accessible to patrons throughout the day. It also allows the cinema to present that type of entertainment that has become so standardised: "Two big feature films—three and a half hours of entertainment."

How much more enjoyable would it be for the patron to be able to attend a separate performance of a film he really had a desire to see, and enter the theatre knowing that he would have five or ten minutes in a fully illuminated auditorium to become properly prepared to absorb entertainment by allowing the proper environment and atmosphere of eager anticipation to saturate the mind he has just brought in from the outer world of realities. The patron at a continuous performance sub-consciously takes the performance for granted—he has a knowledge that "this sort of thing was going on for three hours before I came in and will continue to go on not only while I am in here, but for three hours after I have gone—the operators and staff have got to be here, this performance is only part of the game."

Curiously enough, in country and smaller provincial towns where life is not so much taken up by long journeys to and from work-a-day occupations, where life is easier and more hours of leisure available, the one performance per evening and the single feature programme is common. With the experience of controlling country cinemas, I can definitely state that the appreciation of the cinema patron who enters the cinema in an atmosphere charged with the curious expectation of the lights going out, coupled with the fact that the programme consists of a feature film really worthy of the name supplemented with a newsreel, cartoon film, and interest "short", is far higher than that of the patron who leaves his big city cinema, satiated and mentally confused by a surfeit of films good and bad.

It is remarkable, that whilst lavish care and attention has been paid to making the patron physically comfortable (which he needs be for the long-sitting he is expected to endure), little or no attempt has been made to cater for his mental comfort.

The three-and-a-half-hour patron leaves the theatre so overwhelmed by concentrating upon the screen for so long, that instead of being refreshed he is weary in mind and senses. Unlike the two-hours patron, who finds time and inclination to attend the cinema twice a week, he has had enough for a fortnight. And so, the highly-paid cinema executives have brought into being a "spoilt child" who, instead of asking for "more," finds the portions so large as to induce a very uncomfortable feeling within.

I still have enough faith and confidence in the public to believe that they would prefer to be offered "quality" rather than "quantity."

"Clean up" cinemas by:

(1) *Providing a maximum programme time of two and a quarter hours.*
(2) *Abolish the "second feature," which at present dubiously justifies its existence as an occupier of time.*
(3) *Abolish the continuous performance system, and institute one, two or three separate performances according to circumstances.*

The economic advantages of these reforms must be appreciated by those in control. Producers would have more incentive to make entertaining quality films rather than "second feature" time-fillers for which there would be no market. Renters would be securing a share of the proceeds for one good film as against one good film and a poor one which they either now supply or make a monetary allowance for. Cinemas would find that with such programmes they would reach a hitherto "untapped" audience, and the overhead expenses of operating their theatres would benefit by not running afternoon matinees at ridiculously low admissions to sparsely occupied seats.

### Empty seats

I wish someone would start to-night. I have just been round to my local cinema, intending to enjoy Richard Tauber, but before passing the box-office, the lurid publicity informed me that a gentleman called "Schnozzle" Durante was "supporting" him. I am not clear whether Tauber was supporting "Schnozzle" or *vice versa*, but I was interested to have it explained to me by my young manager friend, the "wisdom" that prompted Mr. Durante being included to "satisfy everyone and provide the 'necessary' light relief."

The "wisdom" was responsible to-night for quite a number of persons including myself, allowing Herr Tauber to display his admirable talents to empty seats that were meant to softly caress our haunches, whilst our minds and senses received refreshment and satisfaction.

## FRANK CAPRA

FRANK CAPRA deduces that British pictures have a market abroad, particularly in America, because he has seen queues waiting to get in to *Henry VIII* in dozens of small towns in the United States.

"It is plain enough they want to see *British* pictures," he said, "so why do you make copies of Hollywood films? You must have a Mr. Deeds of your own. He's a real American."

"We have," I told him, "but, you see they don't frequent the places where the magnates go to lunch."

"That's all part of your amateur attitude. You think a palace of a studio makes for good pictures. It doesn't take anyone in who knows the business. Why the only studio that's consistently failed in Hollywood is the beauty—marble halls and swimming pools. It has been changing hands all the time.

"Pictures aren't a snob business, they're entertainment, and," he settled himself deeper into his chair, "if you want to say something serious once in a while, then do it through comedy or fairy tale, anything but the pulpit attitude. Look at Disney."

He began to talk about *Lost Horizon.* He thought he had made plenty of faults in it. He looks upon it as an experiment and he was annoyed because the French office had cut out ten of the most important minutes; the main crux of the discussion between Conway and the Lama and also where Maria became an old woman.

"They don't think it's pretty! Well, it's the last of my pictures that'll be shown in France!"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# FIVE FILMS

## by John Grierson

THE MOST CURIOUS result of the quota war has been the new orientation in British film values. Before it, our eyes were focused on Denham and the "bigs." To-day, the big pictures, like the dinosaurs, appear to be too big to be economic and are heading for extinction. We are all interested now in what can be done with £50,000. With the Board of Trade talking of £15,000—we are even interested in what can be done with £12,000. The record of these cheaper pictures is a lot better than the more pretentious ones. I do not mean better in production values but better in essence.

Who could not put production value—if you mean fine camera work and fine settings and expensive stars—into a picture costing a couple of hundred thousand? It would be difficult to avoid it. But without any pretensions to such values, some of the cheaper pictures have a vitality which the luxury ones lack. My theory is that this vitality comes almost invariably from the English music-hall, and that this is true British Cinema's only contact with reality. I cite names like Will Hay, George Formby, Jack Hulbert. I include Ralph Lynn and Tom Walls, who are not far away. I even include Charles Laughton, who, although he might not be happy to appear in this galley, is still within the vulgar tradition. His *Henry the Eighth* is none other than our old friend, "Henry the Eighth I am, I am"; and so, for that matter, is Charles himself. Now one hears that Douglas Wakefield has been added to the list of successes in a film called *Penny Pools*, which cost £5,500 and was made by the Mancunian Film Corporation in Manchester.

GEORGE FORMBY in *Feather Your Nest* typifies the tradition. Directed by William Beaudine, an American director of the older school, the film is of average efficiency only, moving slickly, but without that especial neatness which characterises the work of say Capra and McCarey. Formby, leaning out of the window, emits the gag that was written in for him—closes the window—finish. Capra, one imagines, or Hitchcock or McCarey, would have added some touch or other of self congratulation on the repartee to give the scene a final flourish. But the essence is there and Formby has brought it from the music-hall, from that contact with common people across the footlights, which the music-hall comedian must have or perish.

Gracie Fields, as a brilliant analysis in this paper once said, is simply the smart girl of any Saturday night sing-song in proletarian England, the girl with the sob in her voice, the fancy notes and the life of the party. George Formby is an equally familiar character. He is the clumsy, diffident, yet smartish young man who can play a mandolin, do a do-da song, and get in a snappy bit of cheek when the boss is not around and the inhibitions are off. He is also, more pathetically, the young man for whom a five shilling rise comprises one entire side of existence and fear of the sack, fear of his mother-in-law, fear of failure in his instalments, comprise the other. He is that curious slave of our modern civilisation for whom the public life is totally a personal one: essentially one might say, a figure composed of small hopes and large fears. Both the hopes and the fears are so common to a large majority of his audience that it is no wonder that his comedy releases them—the comedy of the teetotaller in love with the publican's daughter, the clumsy and fearful young man among the delicacies of recording apparatus, which in accepted sub-normality he could never hope to understand, the love-sick young couple in the jerry-built house, etc.

But if near to common experience—and to be honoured for that—the level of experience is obviously not deep. One has only to compare the social anarchy implicit in the Marx Brothers, the doctrine of original impotence implicit in Laurel and Hardy and the poor man against the sky of Chaplin, to see how much further our film comedy must go before it "rates." One supposes that our comedy will not rate cinematically until it rates philosophically. Formby is a good performer—natural and unmannered—but he lacks something in comic line. Comic line derives directly from idea.

I HAVE FOUND two other films worth recording. As an exercise in fast comedy, I recommend *Love is News*, directed by Tay Garnett and produced by Darryl Zanuck. This story of a young millionairess (Loretta Young), tortured by reporters and getting her own back on one of them, is well done. Examine particularly the freshness and the speed of the comedy ideas. It illustrates as well as any film the American capacity for invention—that invention which used to be distinguished in the schools from imagination. America has probably more of it than any people since Renaissance Italy.

### Feather Your Nest

An A.T.P. film, directed by William Beaudine, with George Formby and Polly Ward

### Love is News

A 20th Century-Fox film, directed by Tay Garnett, with Tyrone Power and Loretta Young

### Make Way for To-morrow

A Paramount Picture, directed by Leo McCarey, with Victor Moore and Beulah Bondi

MORE IMPORTANT, there is Leo McCarey's film *Make Way for To-morrow*—the most brilliantly directed and acted film of the year. The story is the essentially sentimental one of an old couple who become a nuisance to their grown-up family; but so, for that matter, was *King Lear* sentimental. The great thing about the film is McCarey's handling of the players. We have not seen for a long time such a demonstration of what directorial control can mean to the art of acting. How much is McCarey will be revealed if you analyse any single situation; for example the old lady putting in a long-distance call to her husband. It is a difficult conversation for the sentiments of the old become, by emphasis, easily unreal. Yet McCarey gives delicacy and even something of tragedy to it, and it is done visually in the isolation he creates for the figure with his cameras. Robert Donat tells me that he was dumbfounded by the acting in this piece and I remember how a similar tribute was paid to McCarey by Charles Laughton after the production of *Ruggles of Red Gap*. My own view is that McCarey is a director's director, and the finest of all directorial craftsmen in Hollywood to-day. Like so many other able men, he derives from the school of Mack Sennett.

# REVIEWED

## *and Basil Wright*

### The Black Legion

A Warner Bros. film, directed by Archie Mayo, with Humphrey Bogart and Dick Foran

### Call it a Day

A Warner Bros. film, directed by Archie Mayo, with Ian Hunter, Alice Brady, Frieda Inescourt, Roland Young, Olivia de Havilland, Peggy Wood and Anita Louise

AFTER Sacco and Vanzetti, Scottsboro', the Texas school explosion, and the perennial lynchings, we are justified in believing almost anything about the U.S.A. *The Black Legion*, following Warner Bros.' usual policy of telling the world about the lice on the Stars and Stripes, is no more incredible than the newspaper paragraphs we read so often and the well documented case histories of the Klu Klax Klan. If the patriotism of local boneheads graduates via the ceremonial of a secret society to the full regalia of Fascist sadism, why worry? It's a story, and the public likes to see a bit of brutality now and then. Look at *Mutiny on the Bounty*.

Humphrey Bogart is of course in the lead (he must be the busiest man in Hollywood since there was a slump in Karloffs) and because he can act he pulls a messy film together and jerks some life into it. It's tough-going for him at first, because he has to be a nice respectable family man, with ambitions for the wife and kid, and it's difficult to keep the dirty look out of a face so trained to out-and-out villainy. Being Bogart, he succeeds, smiles at his wife and buys things for his boy (the only figure in the film who really deserves the attention of the Legion). But when, against all precedent, he misses promotion to foremanship at the factory, and sees it go to a brilliant young engineer who happens to be a Pole (though naturalised)—well, what could be more natural than to join up with some pals who want America for the Americans?

Initiation ceremonies, all hoods and crossbones, sweep him on the tide of a blood-curdling oath of allegiance to the mass beating-up of the Pole, and the Bogart face can slip back to normal for the rest of the film. He proceeds by easy stages to the murder of his best friend, squeals on his fellow legionaries, and departs with them all on a life-sentence. Close-up of wife, and fade-out.

Let us not omit to record a sententious speech by the Judge summing up the principles of American democracy and quoting extensively from Abraham Lincoln, while the audience, realising the horrors are over, gropes for its hat and coat.

While Bogart is on the screen the film is worth watching—but outside that it's just the same old fundamental mistake as turns up in *You Only Live Once*. There ought to be a moral but there isn't; except the general one that it doesn't pay to use violence on an unofficial basis. *Black Legion* would be a better shocker if it didn't pretend to be a social document; and that it does so pretend is pretty well indicated by an opening title disclaiming any reference to actual persons or events. Anyhow, it ought to go down well at Berchtesgaden.

HORROR film number two is *Call It a Day*. Here we have a clever little play glorifying the cheaper dreams of London's suburbia, rolled out flat in Hollywood and served up again lukewarm with a relish of good production values and a couple of "Punch" jokes. The suburban home—magically transferred to Mayfair as all suburban homes would like to be—is badly hit by the sentimental glamour of Primavera. The little girl goes nuts about Dante Gabriel Rossetti, her

*Make Way for To-morrow (Paramount)—reviewed on opposite page*

elder sister falls madly in love with an artist, the son and heir wants to go touring abroad but is side-tracked by the blonde next door (who has a sports car), and Pa and Ma severally consider (in the nicest way of course) the pros and cons of infidelity, decide against it, and are left holding hands between the twin beds while a caged songbird suggests things at the moonlit window (in the nicest possible way of course).

NOW MANY thousands of pleasant people live in the suburbs, and they should arise and protest against this presentation of themselves as a lot of whimsical seconds in a Fragrant Minute. They should explain that they would be very unhappy if their dreams came true, and that in any case they don't really mean anything by that sort of dream. They should point out that the characterisation right through the film is about as convincing as the pre-war General Omnibus and the bogus French Taxi which Hollywood proudly presents as existing in modern London. And when they have done all this they can ask the critics to explain gently to the producers that they'd do much better to stick to pictures of contemporary life in America, and leave it to the English film industry to avoid making anything so unreal about England as *Call It a Day*. Meantime, we may fear that English audiences will inject themselves vigorously with this particular drug, and remark, as did a lady in the circle at the New Gallery, "But my dear it *must* be an English film. There isn't a trace of an American accent." Yes, lady, they all speak good English because a lot of them come from England—but just that doesn't make it an English film; ask Mr. Korda.

**Reviews of films by John Grierson and Basil Wright will be a regular feature of World Film News.**

# FROM MONMOUTH TO MOVIES

## Lyme Regis not Movie-mad says Richard Carr

THE cinema is not a vital element in the leisure-time of Lyme Regis people. In this little sea-town, described by Macaulay as a "small knot of steep and narrow alleys, lying on a coast, wild, rocky and beaten by stormy seas," neither young nor old are movie mad; the cinema seem comparatively unimportant.

* * * *

Lyme was once an important town in the West, a wool and weaving centre and a seaport doing a considerable trade in wines and tobacco. Its industry and commerce made it a stronghold of puritanism. In the Civil War it stood out for Parliament when all the West, save Poole, was held by the Royalists, resisting siege by Prince Maurice of the Rhine for two months. It stood strongly for Protestantism against the "Papists," for Parliament against Absolutism.

The strength of its opinions were again shown when Monmouth made his bid for the throne of England in the name of the Protestant religion. He landed at Lyme and a large part of the town's male working population marched out with him. They were marched aimlessly around Somerset until, armed only with scythes and staves and rough swords, they were slaughtered at Sedgemoor or taken to grace the gibbets of the Bloody Assize.

This was the last event of national importance in the history of Lyme. From then on its chronicles tell of decline in its industries. But the people held stubbornly to their opinions and, in a smaller way, went on fighting for them.

Out of centuries of such struggle its people achieved a character and strength of their own. It is written all over the counties of Dorset and Devon, this struggle and its later phase, the struggle against squire and parson is mutely testified by the scores of chapels, around the right to build and to worship in which many a bitter fight waged. And, in the nineteenth century, Dorset gave to trade unionism its most celebrated martyrs.

* * * *

To-day Lyme is a seaside resort, small, and, as such places go, unimportant. Its past gives it and its people a character not to be found at the popular seaside resort: the film of the Monmouth Rebellion, once proposed but banned by authority, could be made in its streets, acted and spoken by its people; and with scarcely a change in clothing would be more eloquent of the subject and the times than most of the expensive costume dramas of the studio. A great deal of the character remains; but its industries have gone. There is now but one important industry: the direct or indirect catering for visitors and summer residents. The town reflects this change in its livelihood-making but slowly; it begins to cater slightly for the visitor. A pin-table amusement saloon has made a nervous appearance on the sea-front, but is regarded with heavy disapproval by the authorities, who, by banning the giving of prizes, have recently struck at the basis of its business. The one cinema in the town is soon to have a "luxury" companion.

* * * *

Lyme's one cinema is perched high on the sea wall, and in the winter rough seas swamp over the entrance giving many a patron a soaking. Films have been shown in this building for eight years; before then they were shown in the eighteenth century assembly rooms, now demolished. The present home of the movies was once the Volunteers' Drill Hall, a name which takes it well back into the nineteenth century. Then it served as a theatre. Underneath the cinema, in the high sea wall, are deep vaults, once Roman baths.

A visit to this cinema is a strange experience to anyone used to London "supers" and their audiences. It seats about three hundred. Its smallness, its setting—the queer old town, the rugged cliffs, and the sea breaking on the rocky shore beneath—make it seem most unreal. The audience too seemed apathetic to the films and certainly not willing to applaud or to praise. It being summer according to the calender, the audience was mixed: the sixpennies—right bang in the front and almost close enough to the screen to take part in the films—and the ninepennies, only a few rows behind, were occupied by local people, mainly young, though here and there a labouring man and his wife, dressed for the visit and clearly uncomfortably conscious of being at the cinema. In the one-and-threes and the balcony were visitors. The mixed nature of the audience made clear-cut impressions difficult.

All these facts, the setting, the smallness of the cinema, the audience, made a hard test for the films. Many of them seemed fantastic in these surroundings. The first, for example, was the magazine-interest film. We were shown how champagne was made, from the field to the table; the latest fashions in women's clothes, some of the garments costing more apiece than many of these people earned in a twelvemonth; finally two young Americans climbing Monte Blanc, in great danger according to the commentator though this was by no means obvious. As the people of Lyme Regis live all their lives at an angle of forty-five degrees, or so it looks to a stranger, this climbing up and down must have seemed very commonplace. A *Secrets of Nature* film was next; it seemed to interest the swells greatly, but the front seats hardly at all. It was about seagulls, again hardly a novelty to the locals.

Then the newsreel. This is bad enough when one sees it in London, sandwiched in a long programme, but here its triviality seemed outrageous. It was all Royalty and parades with one of the usual obscure and meaningless motor-bike-races-round-the-houses thrown in. It brought nothing of the events pounding the world to pieces, nothing of the happenings and men of our day. Its dullness and uselessness was never so striking as in this place where real, vital news of the outside world could mean so much.

The main feature film in the first half of the

## From Monmouth to Movies *(contd.)*

week was *Men of Yesterday*. This film was not well liked on its London showing, being condemned for its sentimentality. It was a film about the efforts of ex-servicemen to promote peace by giving a dinner to ex-servicemen from allied and ex-enemy countries. It had all the faults of this conception and all the features of the ex-servicemen's appeal and movements. It was overwhelmingly sentimental and, set against the stream of world events, its solution of the war problem seemed astonishingly trivial and foolish.

Yet it made some impression. It had an uncomfortable sincerity; the people were more real than is usual in British films. It was about ex-servicemen and they were very much like ex-servicemen. There were no stars, apart from the almost forgotten Stewart Rome and a short appearance by George Robey. It was obviously liked, though this liking was tempered by the objection to war films which, it seems, is as strong here as elsewhere.

I give these impressions for what they are worth because it is almost impossible to find out what people here like or dislike in films. The box-office does not show it, save in rare cases; the people express few opinions, occasionally one or two will say the film was bad. The first show decides the attendance on the next two evenings; opinions are reported among friends, work-mates and neighbours. The fantastic and far-fetched are not popular. Neither is the educational. Musical films are; *Rose Marie* was one of this year's successes. The other was *Mutiny on the Bounty*, which did great business.

Other films which have done fairly well this year have been: *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, *Strangers on Honeymoon*, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *The Three Maxims*, *When East Meets West*. In so far as attendance provides any sort of guide here, George Arliss has some following, as have the Lynn-Walls team. War films are as unpopular here as elsewhere; educationals are disliked; "near the knuckle" films frowned upon; Westerns and action pictures fairly popular with the men; musicals with the women.

* * * *

In the summer the cinema gets a great deal of its support from visitors; in the winter it depends on the local people. It is the only form of amusement for winter evenings in this town, but during the winter there is a great deal of unemployment. The money earned in the short summer season has to be eked out over the long winter and visits to the cinema are therefore few and far between for most. Through the winter the cinema does a fair business, but very rarely indeed does it have to turn people away, small though the seating capacity be.

It must be remembered too that the intense interest in pictures, fed by the "fan" magazines, by the press reviews and stories, has little effect here—the number of films that can be seen is limited. With one cinema there is no choice. Film papers are something which the local people do without. The reviews of the films in the Press, even the "current release" reviews are useless to these people, for only a small—and not always the best — part of the releases ever reach them and then only long after the reviews have appeared.

Allowing for all these factors; for the poor selection opportunity, for the smallness of the cinema, for the poverty of the people over the greater part of the year, the comparative unimportance of the movies here is not completely explained.

The truth is that, though it has been in and around Lyme for many years, the cinema has not driven itself into the lives of these people as it has done in the towns. The only leisure-time entertainment for the young in the rough winters it is not a vital part of their lives. Perhaps it is as important to them as it was to most people twenty years ago; a way of passing an evening, a place to go to, a chance to see places, people and events occasionally. They live under conditions that have changed but little in external environment; they are tied to ways of life and of thought much more than are the young in the towns.

It should be emphasised too that there is a community of life and of interest in places like Lyme which is not found in the towns. Chapel-going, the gossiping in the streets and in the neighbour's house—in the quiet, warm summer evenings the streets are alive with groups of men and women gossiping—and a common dependance upon summer "lets." Life in these places is harder, more in contact with natural dangers, more built around the seasons and the tides, more bound up with the past, its thinking and living, and less affected by the new and the novel, than in the urban district.

In any case much of the youth is drawn away to brighter employment prospects in neighbouring towns; those left find their occupation around the parasitical job of providing for visitors. Yet these people have a character and strength that prevents them from ever becoming a race of boarding-house keepers. If they ever get the cinema-going habit, not any film will get by. Circumstances, environment, plus a deeply critical nature, a hatred of artifice and showyness—these factors will prevent the movie which is unreal and false being successful among these people.

## An open letter to the gentleman who says "Oh Yeah?"

6 Tower Hill,
E.C.3.
20*th July*, 1937.

SIR,

You say you cannot see the point of making pompous and bland announcements in the press to the self-satisfied effect that our publication is better than so-and-so's.

The advent of a new publication for the cinematograph industry in the form of CINEMA MANAGEMENT some four months ago, was one which not only aroused interest but caused much sceptical comment.

Obviously the possibilities for the successful production of a new publication for the cinema industry was a matter of considerable conjecture. Several efforts have been made in the last few years but the right angle never seemed to be struck.

After only four months of life, CINEMA MANAGEMENT is rapidly becoming a valuable mouthpiece for the independent producer, renter and exhibitor whose aims and efforts it cultivates and fosters.

CINEMA MANAGEMENT can and will continue to progress, it will give information which will be of interest to all connected with the film business. If you have not already seen this publication send 2*d.* in stamps for a free copy.

Your remarks whether appreciated or otherwise will be welcomed. Every consideration will be given to suggestions and queries will be answered both promptly and efficaciously—our password is "Efficient Service."

Yours truly,
The Editor,
**Cinema Management.**

"Chaplin wanted to play Napoleon . . . "

# PIPE DREAMS

## *"I Talk of Dreams"*

RECENTLY I wrote an article called "Cinema Utopia" (quoted in *W.F.N.*, April), in which I suggested a group of novels and themes, which, under certain directors and with certain stars, would make, in my opinion, ideal movies.

This might be construed as an idle pastime. "Hollywood doesn't day-dream"—the cynic will say, "Hollywood *does!*"

But sometimes, Hollywood "*doesn't!*"—For all kinds of reasons. Often, plans for films are announced, casts and directors assembled, and then, suddenly, the whole thing is thrown into discord. Not because it wasn't a good idea in the first place—but because someone in the office remembered that Ohio and Pennsylvania would never pass it, or that a certain foreign government might object, or for one of an unlimited number of other reasons, each more esoteric than the other. Added to which are the secret dreams and desires of certain stars and directors to do things—specific things—they know they could do superlatively well, but which must remain frustrations because the studio executives "know what the public wants"—and that is usually that!

## *"Which are the Children of an idle Brain"*

For example.

What ever became of Robert Flaherty's projected film of the American Indian? That Irish poet of the camera who mirrored the tropics so poignantly in *Moana* and (with Murnau) in *Tabu* planned to make a film in New Mexico for Fox on the Indian Reservations there. It would have done for the Indian what Flaherty did for the Eskimo in *Nanook* and the inhabitants of the Aran Islands in *Man of Aran*, namely, it would have been the epic of a race. But Fox never let Flaherty make it.

Sergei Eisenstein wanted to do Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* for Paramount when that company brought him over here. Dreiser was enthusiastic about his script. But the Hays office objected. The film was made by someone else and the whole point of the novel perverted. Then, Eisenstein planned another film for his American debut—an original story called *Glass Houses*, the moral of which was known to everybody, viz. "People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones." His idea was never approved by Paramount. How he subsequently went to Mexico, with private backing, to make *Que Viva Mexico!* an ethnic tragedy of the Mexican people which turned up in New York as the perverted *Thunder over Mexico*, is too well known now to be detailed here.

## *"Begot of nothing but vain fantasy"*

Karl Freund, Ufa's ace cameraman, who was responsible for the fascinating photography for *The Last Laugh*, *Metropolis*, *Variety*, was brought here by Universal, and the first thing he wanted to do was a film of New York, after the manner of his famous *Berlin: The Symphony of a Big City*. It was never done. Freund turned to directing cheap shockers.

Metro bought the rights to Werfel's novel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, which dealt with Turkish massacres in Armenia during the late holocaust (1914-18) in Europe. But the Turkish Government objected and threatened to boycott all MGM. pictures in Turkey if the novel were filmed. The investment in the novel was written off to profit and loss and the idea shelved. There will be no film of *Musa Dagh*.

Similarly, Paramount bought the rights to Humphrey Cobb's shocking exposé of conditions at the front in that same carnage, *Paths of Glory*, but this time the French government objected, since the villain in the book was a French general. Paramount desperately toyed with the idea of changing the locale to Czarist Russia and making the general a White Guard—no one could object to that, except a few expatriates in Paris and they didn't count. But it was no go, and another investment was lost.

As for *It Can't Happen Here*, everyone knows how almost every Fascist state in Europe objected to the filming of that story and how it was shelved and temporarily, at least, forgotten.

## *"Which is as thin of substance as the air"*

Pudovkin, the great Soviet director, once wanted to do Zola's tremendous story of the mines, *Germinal*, but, for some reason, it never happened. Eisenstein got as far as a lengthy, detailed scenario on which he worked two years, which would have resulted in a Gargantuan film history of the city of Moscow, but he discarded the idea for mysterious

"Fox stopped Flaherty from filming the Red Indian"

# *OF LONDON & HOLLYWOOD*

by
Herman
G.
Weinberg

**"Lorre wanted to make an anti-war comedy"**

reasons to work on *Bezhin Meadow*, which he has almost completed now.

An announcement once appeared that Paul Muni would play Nijinsky, in a film based on the life of the Russian dancer, with Charles Laughton as Diaghilev. This would have made a splendid film. What happened?

## *"And more inconstant than the wind"*

Erich von Stroheim, director of *Greed* and *The Merry Widow*, recently stated that he would like to film his novel, *Paprika*. The answer was the role of a spy in a French film which he went abroad to make. *Paprika* would have served to rehabilitate the greatest directorial talent of our time, but movies never do the obvious thing, even when the obvious thing is right.

**"Laughton was to have made *The Field of the Cloth of Gold*"**

G. W. Pabst, director of *Kameradschaft* and *The Beggar's Opera*, wanted to do a film in Italy on Spartacus, the slave driver. Mussolini said "No!"

Charlie Chaplin wanted to play Napoleon. So did Edward G. Robinson. Neither film was made.

Peter Lorre bought the rights to that delightful anti-war comedy from the Czech, *The Good Soldier Schweik*, hoping that someone would film the story and let him play the title role which he could do superbly. No one in Hollywood was interested. Instead, Lorre is offered such insultingly stupid roles as *Mad Love*, *Crack-Up*, etc.

Erich Wolf Korngold, the German composer, was brought to Hollywood by Warners to do the musical arrangement for *Midsummer Night's Dream*. When that was finished, he dreamed of doing a film on the life of Beethoven, with himself playing Beethoven. No one paid any attention to him. Edward G. Robinson was so vehement in also wanting to play Beethoven that he threatened to abrogate his contract if Warners didn't let him. They didn't let him.

## *"Sport with the ever restless mind of man"*

Stokowski wanted to do a film on the life of Wagner, with himself as Wagner. He still wants to do it, but no one will back it. Instead, he is appearing in *The Big Broadcast of* 1937.

Jean Cocteau, the French poet, announced that he would do a new version of that old, silent shocker, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, which had all the aesthetes ga-ga a decade ago. Nothing came of it. Later, he and Chaplin promised to meet in Bali some day and do a film together. This will really be, as the boys in the back-room would say, "something!" if it ever happens, which it probably won't.

Korda announced *Field of the Cloth of Gold*, with Maurice Chevalier, Charles Laughton and a host of distinguished players in an historical film romance in the grand manner, but it was never made. For that matter, Universal once also announced that it would re-make *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* with Lon Chaney's role taken this time by Lorre. Another pipe-dream.

A friend of mine, Roman Freulich, director of a few experimental shorts, spent a whole afternoon, once, telling me how he would make a film of Robinson Jeffer's poem, *Roan Stallion*. To those who are familiar with this poem, idealism can go no further.

## *"Dreams are but interludes which fancy makes"*

And, as if to keep up the noble tradition of movies and roles that never happened but should have happened, just the other day Bette Davis, bless her heart, announced that she would take a big part in the forthcoming Warner Bros. film on the life of Zola—if they would give her the bit she was dying to do—Nana.

**" Pudovkin wanted to do Zola's *Germinal* . . ."**

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# THE JAPANESE BENCHI

*The Japanese "benchi" or commentator of the silent films developed a new art when talkies came in. He interweaves with the American dialogue sound effects and translation.*

## BY OSWALD M. WYND

A Modern Japanese Cinema

It is pleasant to upset Occidental complacency by stating emphatically that the Japanese had "talkies" long before the idea was even embryonic in the West. It must be admitted that the "sound" which accompanied the Japanese presentation of the earlier Hollywood films was not mechanical and only very slightly synchronised but for all that it was unquestionably efficient and effective.

When the silent picture with its English sub-titles began to gain popularity in Japan it became obvious that some effort would have to be made to aid Oriental comprehension of the thread of the film narrative. The experiment of adding Japanese characters beneath the printed English explanations was one of the first attempts to solve the problem but it was found that the brevity and "snappy" phrases largely relied on by the American producers of that time made adequate translation difficult. After numerous other methods had been tried one was evolved which made an instantaneous appeal to the cinema-going public and resulted in the appearance of a personage entirely unique in film history. He was the "benchi" or translator; an individual possessed of histrionic ability in the Japanese manner who very often proved to be a real artist in his own field.

I can recall all those silent Hollywood epics of the Cecil B. de Mille school made glorious by the wailings and palpitating enthusiasm of the "benchi." This gentleman by no means confined himself to merely reproducing dialogue but enlarged his function until he was practically the Japanese version of the cinema organ, holding in reserve a repertoire of noises which would unquestionably have embarrassed a Wurlitzer.

### Silk-robed genius

Certain of the "benchi" were justly more famed than others and the most important Tokyo picture palace boasted an artist who had laboriously worked his way upwards from Suburbia; eventually, by dint of his virtuosity, finding himself able to demand a financial remuneration in keeping with his talent.

Although as an Occidental I was supposed to prefer the English sub-titles to the Japanese vocalisation, the mere dullness of the printed word had no chance of competing with the dramatic roarings of a silk-robed genius. I listened, as did most Europeans, to the "benchi" and discussed his respective merits with my friends much in the same way as now I might—if I were so inclined—argue about the acting ability of Sir Cedric Hardwicke.

A film, I think it was called *The Eleventh Hour*, remains fixed in my mind, not due to its excellence, but simply because on that occasion the "benchi" surpassed himself. There was a shot in the film of a submarine sinking and we were presented with photography of a tin model subsiding slowly to the bottom of a porcelain bath. The "benchi," appreciating the weakness of the film, realized that it was his duty to bolster up that limp production and so, bringing all the manifold aspects of his talent into play, he treated us to an absolute onslaught of sheer artistry. Each bubble which emerged from the synthetic wreck was accompanied by a most incredible assortment of desperate and horrible gurglings. The tin model sank, and we were harrowed by a symphony of aquatic noises interspersed with fiendish screams which suggested all too realistically the agony of dying men. That miserable fake shot became a stark reality and an obvious fraud was converted, for those of us in that Tokyo cinema, into a drama of vital intensity.

### Threat of the talkies

The advent of talkies to the Orient thus brought more than a revolution in film technique, it threatened the security of a popular profession. It was impossible at first to imagine the translator competing with those brazen mechanical voices which were nearly always pitched at a volume certain to drown out even his most inspired efforts. Most of us, then—back in 1929 when the talkies really came to stay as far as Japan was concerned—sorrowfully relegated the "benchi" to a premature oblivion. It was the sudden extinction of a newly evolved mode of artistic expression; the driving forth of a talented individual whose shrill enthusiasm had enlivened many a dull film.

I can remember hearing and seeing the *Singing Fool* in Tokyo, and it awakened in me no feeling of excitement. I was not inspired by the tremendous force the talking picture might become, nor did I contemplate its possibilities in artistic and educative spheres. I was conscious of nothing save irritation towards that howling "mammy" expert who had drowned out our favourite with his enormous voice and was thus the murderer of art.

At first it seemed as if preserved sound had won a sweeping victory and it was not until talkies were apparently well established that the magnates of the film industry, in its Oriental branches, began to sense a popular rumble of protest. It was not difficult to find where the trouble lay. The novelty of hearing voices which jumped at one from the screen had worn off and the average Japanese, understanding little or none of the dialogue, was beginning to say very rude things about the tone of the Occidental voice—especially the Hollywood voice. Then, too, with the advent of the talking film action tended to slow down and it was no longer possible, as it had been during the days of the silent film, to follow the theme without printed aid. Japanese audiences were forced to endure long bouts of conversation which meant nothing to them and eventually they revolted. The cry went abroad,

"We want our 'benchi'."

A tentative trial of the "benchi" and the talking film in collaboration was one of the most interesting experiences I have ever had. The silk clad figure, conscious of the weight of popularity behind him, entered his little box near the screen and prepared to compete with Miss Chatterton.

The chaos which was generally anticipated did not result. The sound of the film was toned down to a reasonable point and the "benchi," while in opposition to the dialogue, never completely overpowered it or was in his turn overpowered. True artist that he was, in the supreme trial for his very professional existence, he triumphed. It was possible, if one were so inclined to listen entirely to the film dialogue, excluding completely from the conscious field of the sound of the translator but it was far more interesting to listen to the English, keeping all the while a certain awareness of the "benchi," so that when the picture became dull as it often did, one was able to switch over attention and listen to delightfully Oriental explanations of Occidental promiscuity.

### Bleak Thursday

For the benefit of those who are particularly sensitive to the subtle competition between translator and talking picture, one day a week has since been set aside to be translatorless. This uninspiring time is largely patronized by Americans and Europeans who, due to the short time of their residence in Japan, or more often sheer lethargy, have failed to acquire sufficient Japanese to enable them to comprehend the "benchi," but those who appreciate the fine points of film-going in Japan avoid that bleak Thursday.

A return to Japan for me would unquestionably include the rare delight of hearing my old friend the "benchi" repelling successfully—by complex vocalisation—waves of those hackneyed inanities which pour forth from the sound track of so many screen epics.

# WORLD OPINION —

## *"Audacious word-builders . . ."*

It is possible to recognise a characteristic of American idiom, the gift of compressed metaphor, of crystallising in a phrase what was once perhaps an American custom or famous occasion. It is a common error to believe that Americans are fond of weird-sounding words which do not mean very much. Perhaps, at three thousand miles they mean only a sound to us, but they nearly always had in the beginning a very precise meaning. The Americans have very little interest in words merely for their sound; words like "swank" and "bally" and "blooming" are much more British than American. The American idiom is most recognisable in phrases which embody a formula for some notable incident or chance emotional experience. Even the compounds we have taken from them manage to pack a story into two words: for instance, "home-spun", "cross-purposes", "fool-proof", "horse sense", a "come-down". Naturally it was during the dizzy pioneer century, the nineteenth, that the American language came into its own, and then the American was discovering his gifts; a continental geography was showing him what trades and professions were to be typically his own. And there is scarcely a department of nineteenth-century American life which has not given to the language new words and idioms long passed into daily use in England. . . .

As the century moved along, American naturally added words in fields in which its people began to show a special aptitude—in engineering and medicine, for example. Perhaps the most moving coinage in American history is the record of the naming of anæsthesia by Wendell Holmes and the young American doctor, W. T. Morton. The entries in the *Dictionary of American English* give all the emotion that the story needs. The first entry is a letter from Holmes to Morton, who had questioned him about a good word to describe the discovery. Holmes replied (this is 1846): "The state produced should, I think, be called 'anæsthesia'; the adjective will be 'anæsthetic'; the means employed will properly be called an 'anti-æsthetic agent,' but this admits of question." Not only the word but the practice admitted of question for twenty stormy years, and the next entry notes a meeting of Boston dentists called in 1865 "to make a formal protest against anæsthesia." The fate of the word and the benediction it described was sealed once for all by the grim requirements of the first modern war. The last entry, from *Harper's Magazine* for September, 1865, the last year of the Civil War, says simply: "Dr. Morton has attended the principal battle-fields administering anæsthetics with his own hands . . ."

These are only a few of the American sources from which we have received an endless number of idioms. For a century and a half we have taken them in from commerce, letter-writing, books, papers and now at a tremendous rate from the movies; a favourite and painless way has been to learn an Americanism which took the fancy of one of our writers. Burke was fond of "to advocate"; Dickens, who heard Cockney better than any man, and American probably worse than any man, brought back "loafer." Robert Louis Stevenson returned from California with a favourite word "shyster"; and the new Earl Baldwin once used before a placid House of Commons "best-seller", "back-slider" and "a party dog-fight." It is a wrong interpretation to say that Americans as such have a special gift for word-making. Maybe they have to-day, but the gift is common to all nations at a certain stage of their history. The nineteenth century was to America what the seventeenth century was to England. The seadogs of Britain had the same qualities as the pioneers of the United States who walked 3,000 miles and broke the prairie before the prairie broke them. Life was young and hard and exciting and vivid, and the people who lived it gave these qualities to the language they used. Well, the pioneer history is over. Americans can now span from coast to coast in thirteen hours, the extensive era is a memory, and her intensive history is already underway.

He would be a bold scholar who could say that America has reached the limit of her word-coining, because so long as there are minds to conceive such a mighty audacity as Boulder Dam there will be minds to invent new words as concrete and audacious. . . .

—Alistair Cooke, *The Listener*

## *"Imaginative, passionate Theatregoers . . ."*

And so with the theatre in London and New York. Here it is a relatively simple matter to put on a play. All one needs to do is cast it, then call in any scene-designer one may fancy. From his sketches anyone with experience in building and painting stage-scenery can do your job, and see that it is delivered to the theatre.

Perhaps the producer will have a few headaches during the process, but as a rule the process of staging a play in London is quite sane, and partakes of the dignity to be found in most businesses. Possibly it is too easy. Never having strained himself emotionally, the producer often discovers his play as well-mannered as himself—and as dramatic as a cold kipper.

In New York, logically, the staging of a play is a prelude to a quiet rest in a mad-house. Little wonder that so many Broadway productions have a rough vitality missing in London offerings! Considering the conditions under which plays are staged in New York, it is a miracle that there are any offerings at all. The pace of metropolitan life, the noise, the competition, are enormously greater than in London. Naturally, a play must at least equal the pulse-beat of the city, if it is to appear even normally alive; and when, as in a crime melodrama, the action must be heightened, the pace of the play must be at machine-gun speed to achieve its effect.

But these are obvious facts, known to everyone, important as they are. From heartache comes achievement. If there is any quicker way to acquire cardiac trouble than putting on a Broadway show I don't know it.

What is the secret of New York's fertility? Year after year Broadway's managers cry that Hollywood finally has destroyed the legitimate theatre. And yet, somehow, every season, new faces appear, fine serious plays and sparkling comedies emerge.

Despite palatial new cinemas, the old, dependable theatre-audience returns to the Shubert, and Mansfield and Maxine Elliott playhouses. Night after night Lindy's, Jack Dempsey's, Caruso's, Sardi's and countless other restaurants on side streets off the Great White Way are jammed with people arguing over the merits and shortcomings of the evening's play. Their conversations are as serious as when they discuss world politics.

To these people, obviously, the theatre is more than mere amusement. Here, I think, is the truest explanation of New York's theatrical supremacy. To the Briton the theatre, essentially, is an escape. No city offers more delightful comedies or magnificently-staged musicals. High comedy, from the days of the Restoration to the modern times of Coward and Lonsdale, has been the pride of the London stage. Despite Shakespeare and other great writers of tragedy, the typical English play offers an escape from the humdrum business of living.

New York, on the other hand, is a violent sort of city—over a million people on Broadway every night; a vast wave of jostling humanity gathered from all parts of the world. London, for all her foreigners, is an English city. New York, despite her big business and skyscrapers, is not truly an American city. Hence its theatre is more international, drawing its stories from the crowded, motley streets, and its methods from everywhere.

It is a significant fact that New York's population includes some two and a half million Jews, and that the majority of producers and playgoers are Jewish. The theatre is in their blood, as in that of no other race: to such imaginative, passionate people the average Anglo-Saxon must appear a tame Milquetoast: and strong drama has a special appeal for this audience, as does the experimental method.

To sum up, the Londoner goes to the theatre to be amused; the New Yorker, more frequently to learn. Not that we do not have our frothy inconsequentials, and our pseudo-artistic failures, than which there is nothing so painful. But it is true that while London audiences shy away from the serious, New York's take a positive pleasure in witnessing morbidities. Perhaps our tastes are not as refined, but a larger percentage of our plays undoubtedly do possess the true dimensions of actuality.

—George Brandt, *The Evening News*

## *"Vigorous films against social abuses"*

The greater concern of the American film with ordinary people and with the problems that arise in ordinary lives has been helped by the greater proneness of social relationships in the United States to explode into violence and by the more glaring unevennesses in the social structure. There are injustices and abuses in England, but they are neither so hideous nor so melodramatic as the "chain" gang and the third degree. Lynchings and murder, rackets and gun-play, are not the whole of life in the United States but they are a part of it, and it is long since the cinema first realised it.

But there is a new tone apparent in the American pictures of social wrongs and of individual misfortunes. A New Orleans correspondent of the *Era* complains that "the reform complex has hit the studios like a disease . . . things have come to such a pass that it is difficult to find an evening's entertainment in town, something to make you forget your troubles instead of getting all steamed up over other people's!" Although film production in America is big business, strongly concentrated in the hands of the Rockefeller and the Morgan clans, this documentary streak in the American cinema has become a radical one, anæmically radical perhaps if compared with the American novel, but radical nevertheless, and strongly so, for an entertainment with such social inhibitions as the cinema.

It is said that "Who's afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?" the theme song of Disney's *Three Little Pigs*, became the anti-depression anthem of the American people and that it did much to carry Roosevelt into office at the Presidential election before last, and it may be that the general popularity of Roosevelt and the New Deal is mainly responsible for such films as *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* and for Paramount's new film *Make Way for To-Morrow*, which is described as an "exposition of the need for social security."

The films directed against various social abuses are more vigorous and brutal than these. *Fury*, *Mountain Justice*, *We Who are About to Die*, and other films have improved on the tradition of *Ten Thousand Years in Sing Sing* and *I am a Fugitive from a Chain-Gang*, and Mr. James Cagney and Mr. Paul Muni are two actors whose own strongly held personal views are tending to confine their activities to this type of film. *Winterset*, which had no racket to expose and was not noticeably tied down to social theory, was based indirectly on the Sacco-Vanzetti case, and probed far deeper into social injustice than English film makers apparently care to do. It is odd, incidentally, that all these films should be made in California, where Tom Mooney still languishes in gaol.

Some American critics have deplored this tendentiousness in the modern American cinema, and find, in fact, tendentiousness in strange places, complaining that *Mutiny on the Bounty* and *The Barretts of Wimpole Street* are films against dictatorships, and that *Lost Horizon* is Communist in tone. Audiences too have objected, but it is likely that here territorial sensitiveness is responsible. But American audiences as a whole must be willing enough to pay for *Gabriel Over the White House*, *Front Page*, *Black Legion*, and *I Promise to Pay*, or the business men who control production would take to more lucrative subjects.

It seems a pity that English films cannot deal so vigorously with vital subjects; such films must be "box-office propositions" in the United States, and the English film lacks both vitality and box-office appeal.

*—The Times*

***Low's Comment on British Film-production (by courtesy of the* Evening Standard*)***

## Spike Hughes on America's George Gershwin

To my mind the famous "Rhapsody in Blue" was the least important piece of music Gershwin ever wrote, but it has a great significance in the life of our time.

To this day nobody quite knows where Gershwin's contribution to that piece left off and where the arranger's began.

Ferdie Grofé, you see, contributed largely to the success of the Rhapsody. He orchestrated it, he adapted it from Gershwin's skeleton conception; it is said that he composed many passages in it.

By ordinary standards the "Rhapsody in Blue" is not good music. Still less is it good jazz. Gershwin was not a composer of jazz; he was a song writer whose songs were written in a form which lent itself to dancing.

But between them Gershwin and Grofé succeeded in convincing the man-in-the-street that the "Rhapsody in Blue" was something out of the ordinary.

Modern music, you must remember, was, and still is, out of touch with the "ordinary" listener. Light music still had its public, but it was limited. A new generation, weaned on ragtime, found life a little flat, a little lacking in "pep."

The "Rhapsody in Blue" was just what they wanted, and they went for it.

Another thing that helped the popularity of the "Rhapsody in Blue" was that it was one of the few pieces of music played by larger orchestras than the listeners could remember.

It was full of "tunes." That is to say, it was full of easily remembered snippets of melody—one bar, two bars in length, which is about as much as the average listener can remember these days . . . .

He convinced Broadwayites and their prototypes all over the world that they were listening to "sophisticated" art, and that jazz had at last acquired some æsthetic standing.

But I persist in calling Gershwin a composer of light music and a song-writer. He wrote it is true, in the style of jazz. "I Got Rhythm" has been the peg to hang many a "swing" record on. But for the most part his music was only incidentally dance music.

You've heard Sophie Tucker sing "The Man I Love"? Well, you can't dance when she sings it because it is purely and simply a twentieth-century ballad, sung freely and with the traditional "expression" of the music-hall.

Certainly there will be no more rhapsodies in blue. The cult of "swing" whatever you may think of it, is a cult for keeping jazz in its place. Gershwin tried to take it out of that place.

Which was a pity, for it was a hopeless task, and the boy had a whale of a lot of talent for a different kind of music.

*— The Daily Express.*

# India's Rope-Trick Talkies

by

## C. K. Sachi

THE stature of the industry in India may be indicated by the fact that its total capitalisation is estimated at very nearly £10,000,000. All this capital as well as the entire labour, direction and management is and has always been 100 per cent Indian. It is estimated that the industry supports about 25,000 people.

There are no less than 300 producing units and, of these, while the largest number are organised as limited liability companies (usually private) there are a few which still remain some rich man's hobby. Even of those organised as commercial concerns, the majority, as a rule, gamble precariously with one picture, one story or one set of artists. About 350 pictures are produced every year and the number has been continually on the increase, but of these, only about a dozen score spectacular success. Of recent months though, a healthy tendency is noticeable and fewer mushroom organisations spring up.

So long as the film was a novelty to dazzle the villager with its miracle of pictures talking, the technical knowledge required to produce average pictures was very little: anybody with a few thousand pounds to risk was sure of a good return and stood to gain enormously. To-day, however, the novelty has worn thin, audiences become daily more critical and, in order to compete successfully, greater experience and technical skill are required.

A number of these one-picture organisations failed disastrously, although it still is very largely true in South India that few pictures fail to recover their cost. The gambler is yielding place slowly to the sober business man who organises with a view to establishing a sound business.

The average amount spent on a talkie is about £5,000, although, every now and then, a spectacular production running to twice that amount, or more, is attempted. Economically, £5,000 makes a safe investment and it is therefore inevitable that the equipment of most studios is miserably inadequate. No British producer will hazard a production with such poor equipment, and the way some talkies are made is as marvellous as the rope-trick.

Some of the more ambitious studios describe themselves as sound-proof, but a crow on the roof or a passing car shatter the illusion. Plate glass and zinc sheets in alternate sections is the usual roofing. Bombay and Calcutta wall in their stages, but there are many, particularly in the South, which do not run to such luxuries. A few scouts outside, or a portly watchman may be, or a piece of curtain, screen operations from the prying eyes of passers-by. Judged by the standards of the market, recording is usually satisfactory and some simple, fool-proof recording system is preferred. The portable R.C.A. is a luxury and is a point for advertisement. One camera and an Eyemo is considered adequate, although some studios run to two or more cameras, but such a thing as a second camera shift is unknown. The weakest department of the studio is the laboratory. One can never be really certain of the work and it is a frequent experience still, to have the product of a whole week emerge from the laboratory with more pinholes than picture.

When the silent film started its career in India, it scored triumphantly with mythological pictures. The gods could not talk indeed, but they could appear and disappear miraculously; the seas could be made to part; a woman turned by a curse into a rock and many other marvels wrought. The first talkie pictures were also mythological, but even the vast store of India's myth and fable was not inexhaustible and the public taste for the merely miraculous began to pall. To-day the vogue of mythology is dead in the North and "social" pictures are now being made. But even now, in the South, mythology is the first favourite. The gods of these pictures are alarmingly human, lacking as much the physical grace as the moral attributes of the divinities they portrayed. Krishna has for example been represented as fat, slim, short and tall. Although these films repelled the educated, the peasant and his wife were well pleased indeed. The stuff that has taken the place of such films is however regrettable. Brilliant exceptions there are, but the attempt to Indianise the most hackneyed themes of Hollywood; to produce cheap "stunt" pictures and an atmosphere of cheap romance foreign to the spirit of the people, is the order of the day. The effort to interpret the civilisation of India, her ageless culture and her spiritual unity is yet to be made.

Indian film stars are plentiful. The stage favourites of yesterday have universally adapted the new medium, impoverishing drama with the progress of the film. We have our Garbos and Laughtons and here and there a precocious child star. One stage star was paid £7,500 for a single feature, and there are a few who earn handsome four-figure incomes. But what acting they do remains largely stagey. Songs have still a large place in public favour and many pictures in South India glory in the number of their songs: about thirty per film, each of over two minutes, is a fair average. The King, the Queen, the Saint and the clown all sing. This is partly responsible for the dreary length of the average Indian picture.

Playing down to the pit has yet to be done to the grievous detriment of quality. A director who refused to allow a child in mortal agony to sing after being bitten by a cobra was taken severely to task. Difficulties also arise in portraying love. One director was told by the producer that he should not allow the hero to kiss the heroine or even to stand too close to her. I know of one case where the producer inserted a clause for bidding close-ups. "I do not believe," declared the producer, "in showing one person only when two are talking, and when a whole person is before you, why show just a head or a shoulder."

The Industry is in a formative stage, and needs very urgently to be protected. The small investor is almost unknown in India and the big financiers have their own whims and fancies. Few, if any, have the imagination and sympathy that the art demands. At such a time it is essential that Government should give a helping hand. Sir Phiroze Sethna, President of The Indian Motion Picture Society puts the position forcibly thus:

"Broadcasting and Aviation are receiving the fullest attention and support from the Government while the Indian film industry, which is equally important and which pays directly £100,000 a year to the exchequer, does not obtain a farthing for encouragement or improvement."

# LAB. WORKERS DEPEND ON OVERTIME —for Living Wage

The first of a series of articles describing the hours and working conditions of British Film Technicians, based upon material collected by the Film Council

THE facts we publish in the following statement on hours and working conditions in film laboratories were supplied by technicians employed in nine different laboratories. Five of these are among the largest in the country and the others include two plants mainly engaged in specialised work for news and colour films. Since the total number of film laboratories in England is only 15, the conditions described can be regarded as fairly representative. They are, if at all, biased in favour of the firms with more satisfactory working conditions, since the majority of those not included are small firms, some of which are greatly below the average standard.

### *Number of shifts worked per day*

Conditions vary from firm to firm, and in the different departments of the larger units. In the majority of cases reported the department concerned worked only one shift each 24 hours, but frequently the working day commences in the early afternoon and continues into the night on certain days of the week. In cases where two or three shifts are worked (two day shifts and one night shift, or else one day shift and one night shift) there is sometimes a rota according to which technicians work alternate weeks on day or night shifts, but at least in one firm there are also permanent night workers. The working period is subject to the greatest fluctuations in laboratories engaged in newsreel work, as the following sample week shows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Monday | 2 p.m. to 11 p.m. |
| Tuesday | 6 p.m. to 12, or in case of a rush 6 a.m. |
| Wednesday | 8 p.m. to 8 a.m. |
| Thursday | 6 p.m. to midnight. |
| Friday | 2 p.m. to 11 p.m. or midnight. |
| Sunday | 4 p.m. until work is completed either at midnight or even as late as 8 a.m. |

### *"Normal" working hours*

Normal working hours exclusive of overtime vary between 8 and 9 hours per day in different firms, 8½ hours being the most usual arrangement with a "normal" working week of between 44 and 48 hours. In the majority of firms work on Saturday afternoons is the rule for the day staffs.

### *Overtime*

With the exception of a few firms where little overtime is demanded, this evil is a regular and much abused feature of employment in film laboratories. A total actual working week of 50 to 60 hours is the normal one for many laboratory technicians and the amount worked rises considerably in periods of exceptional rush work. The continual working periods of 30 to 40 hours demanded from technicians engaged on processing the coronation newsreels have received wide publicity in the Press, but while this is clearly an extreme case, long periods of uninterrupted labour under rush conditions are of frequent occurrence in this industry. Sunday work is exceptional in most firms.

### *Overtime payment*

In the laboratories the whole problem of overtime is indissolubly linked with that of wages. Although the present inquiry excludes this subject, it is essential to note that in this branch of the industry the average rate of wages is so low that in many cases the employees have come to depend on overtime work for a living income. It is known that in one instance a scheme of the management to increase the staff in order to abolish overtime work was opposed by the employees on these grounds. But there are also other cases where overtime is a condition of continued employment. The most usual rates of pay for overtime work are time and a half for the first two hours after the normal working day, and double pay for very late night and Sunday work. But the conditions vary in this respect and in some cases the rates are as low as time and a quarter and time and a half respectively, while there are firms in which a flat wage per week is paid irrespective of overtime.

### *Compensation for short time work*

The extent to which overtime work has come to be regarded as normal in the industry is shown by the fact that in those cases, where an irregular supply of work enables technicians to leave early on certain occasions, a deduction is made not from the ordinary but from the overtime pay.

### *Holidays*

The usual practice appears to be a two weeks' holiday with pay, but there are also some cases where only one week is given, while in one instance the technicians receive one week's holiday and an extra week's pay at Christmas in compensation for the second week. In another firm holidays are regarded as a "privilege" instead of a right of the staff.

### *Payment of wages during periods of sickness*

As a rule the wages of regular employees continue to be paid, when they are ill. In some instances, however, there are time limits for pay at the full rate, only half the wage being paid after a relatively short period. Two recent cases are known where holidays were cancelled in compensation for loss of working time owing to sickness.

### *Air conditioning and sanitary arrangements*

Since much of the work in laboratories has to be carried out in darkness or semi-darkness the problem of air-conditioning and temperature regulation is of the greatest importance for the health of the employees. Unfortunately conditions vary greatly in this respect even among the larger firms. In one of the latter, we were informed, there is an air-conditioning installation, but it appears to go wrong continually, with the result that the temperature in the processing rooms frequently rises to 80 and 90 degrees, while the atmosphere is vitiated by chemical fumes. Another reply from a firm, otherwise air-conditioned, is: "chemical basement with little ventilation." Cases in which health arrangements are unsatisfactory are unfortunately only too frequent.

### *Breaks in shifts for meals*

Except in certain cases of night work there are regular breaks for meals in all the laboratories.

### *General features of employment in laboratories*

The majority of technicians working in laboratories are regularly employed, but mechanisation of standard processes is working a revolution in their status. There is a widespread tendency gradually to replace older men by juvenile labour working automatic machines at greatly reduced pay.

# PEOPLE OF THE STUDIOS

## Great Britain

### Denham

Korda's plan for discovering Britain's potential stars and starlets . . . talent scouts spot likely young actors and actresses who are given rôles in a series of short films. Oscar Deutsch will play these in his cinemas, and audiences register their opinions of the newcomers on provided cards. Mr. Korda casts accordingly.

Latest outcome of the Goldwyn-Korda-United Artists deal . . . Goldwyn hopes to make two pictures at Denham next year, and Walter Wanger one. Korda himself promises between twenty-four and twenty-eight pictures, to cost £2,000,000.

* * * *

Basil Dean brought genuine stall-holders from a London street-market to adorn a Soho set, built for *First and Last*, a Galsworthy story starring Vivien Leigh and Laurence Olivier. Out in the grounds the South Riding Agricultural Society's Annual Show was reconstructed for *South Riding*—cameraman Harry Stradling tracking his camera through acres of cattle, sheep and men . . . carefully avoiding Spanish Galleons and Russian buildings in the background.

* * * *

Ruth Chatterton, playing opposite Anton Walbrook, Prince Consort of *Victoria the Great*, in *The Rat*—new version of Ivor Novello's silent success. Hans Remeau, who worked with Walbrook on Austrian film *Maskerade*, preparing the film, Marjorie Gaffney scripting, and Jack Raymond directing.

Satisfactory verdict passed on first few thousand feet of *The Drum*, new Sabu vehicle from story by A. E. W. Mason. Zoltan Korda shooting near the Khyber pass.

Annabella still at Denham . . . making *Follow the Sun* with David Niven, Paul Lukas, Romney Brent, Stewart Rome and Frederick Dewhurst. Harold Schuster directing.

Barry K. Barnes, playing lead in *Return of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, never been filmed before. Barnes is twenty-eight, born in Chelsea, threw over architecture for the stage.

* * * *

Basil Wright and Ian Dalrymple making a film of the Basque refugee children for Victor Saville productions . . . shooting in the refugee camp, in the homes to which some have been drafted, and in the studios. Arthur Jarrett of Gaumont-British and Oscar Deutsch of Odeon Theatres are securing distribution.

### Elstree

Albert de Courville is directing *Old Boy* with Albert Burdon.

Joe Rock, managing director of Rock Studios, is an old hand in the industry. Entered business during the war with Vitagraph, writing, directing and acting in comedies for five years. Made comedies and dramas for most U.S. companies; spent a year in Japan, China and Java experimenting with Howard Hughes Multicolour system. Produced famous Java volcano film, *Krakatoa*, which earned the Hollywood Academy Award for the best novelty picture of 1934. Came to England to supervise a picture for Wainwright Productions—stayed to form his own company at Elstree, since producing light comedies with Nellie Wallace, Archie Pitt, Claude Dampier, the Mills Bros., etc. Latest pictures: *Cotton Queen*, with Will Fyffe and Stanley Holloway, and *The Edge of the World*, a film of Scottish life on an isolated island.

### Pinewood

Alfred Hitchcock, Nova Pilbeam and Derick de Marney still working on *A Shilling for Candles*. Bernard Knowles, cameraman, turned on *Good Companions* and *Jack Ahoy* for Gaumont at Shepherd's Bush.

*Gangway* clear of the cutting room, Jessie Matthews and Sonnie Hale starting *Full Sail* with Roland Young, Barry Mackay, Noel Madison and Jack Whiting. Glen MacWilliams at the camera.

Big surprise of the month . . . Jack Buchanan's company to make a film version of Gordon Daviot's stage play *Richard of Bordeaux*—with John Gielgud. Film is first on the 1938 schedule. No director assigned yet.

### Cricklewood

In *Old Mother Riley* the name part is taken by Arthur Lucan, the first man to play a woman in a full-length feature film. Oswald Mitchell, the director, has been General and Production Manager of Stoll Picture Productions since 1927, and is Director of Visual Education. He has written and produced for Butcher's, *Danny Boy*, *Shipmates o' Mine*, *King of Hearts*, *Variety Parade*.

**DENHAM ECONOMY AXE**

Disquieting news has reached *W.F.N.* of the so-called economy measures slowly breaking up the finest equipped and most organised special effects department outside Hollywood. London Films' greatest asset is tobogganing into oblivion.

Already several members have been transferred to other departments to secure a small saving in monetary outlay with a resultant loss in co-operative organisation.

Due to this, Lawrence Butler the present head of the effects department, one of the most skilled miniature builders in the world will not renew his contract which expires on August 16th. He intends to return to Hollywood.

Members are applying to other studios for employment and so a valuable team of technicians trained at heavy cost by L.F.P. is being disbanded. One man writes: "Fear of unemployment has completely changed the once friendly atmosphere of these studios to one of suspicion and depression, while red tape slowly strangles the loyalty of employees without whose aid top grade pictures cannot be made."

The complaint is hereby registered, but it should be remembered that Korda, like other producers, is having his difficulties.

## America

### Warner Bros.

Anatole Litvak directing Charles Boyer, Claudette Colbert and Basil Rathbone in *Tovarich* . . . cost expected to top all films on the current list. Robert Lord producing.

Leslie Howard-Olivia de Haviland starrer, *It's Love I'm After* (formerly *The Love Derby*), in the cutting room. . . original story by Maurice Hanline (who wrote *One Rainy Afternoon*), scripted by Casey Robinson (who scripted *Call It a Day*), and directed by Archie Mayo. Eric Blore, Bonita Granville, George Barbier and E. E. Clive in the cast.

Errol Flynn, busy as anybody just now, co-stars with Joan Blondell in *Perfect Specimen* with Michael Curtiz directing and Edward Everett Horton supplying comic relief.

Kay Francis teamed with Preston Foster in *First Lady*, Dick Powell with Lee Dixon in *Varsity Show* — both pictures now shooting.

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*King and the Chorus Girl* temporarily held back from this country till the topical background is a thing of past memory . . . maybe we won't see the picture at all as American newspapermen say Fernand Gravet bears striking resemblance to the Duke of Windsor. Title now changed to *Romance in Paris*, to avoid danger of libel.

### United Artists

Selznick International's nine months' search for a Tom Sawyer ends with the discovery of twelve-year-old Tommy Kelly, picked from 25,000 boys whom Selznick claims to have interviewed. Tommy lives in East Bronx, New York's poorest quarters . . . father drawing poor-relief.

* * * *

A new company, Mayfair Productions, formed by four former Disney associates, making Skippy cartoons in technicolor. Skippy has appeared daily for the past fifteen years in more than 100 American newspapers.

* * * *

Archie Mayo taking over *Marco Polo* from John Cromwell. Cromwell threw over the direction of this Gary Cooper picture after four days of production . . . reputedly because of story differences with Sam Goldwyn.

William Cameron Menzies, *Things to Come* director, signed by Selznick as production assistant and co-director of picture with Robert Sinclair.

* * * *

Dorothy Parker and Alan Campbell, husband-wife writing team, signed on with Goldwyn to dialogue *The Goldwyn Follies* and script *A Kiss in the Sun*, Gary Cooper-Merle Oberon picture with William Wyler as director.

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Selznick negotiating to import Hitchcock . . . nothing fixed yet.

## M.G.M.

Interest is centred round two Ferenc Molnar plays at Culver City . . . William Powell and Myrna Loy starring in *Double Wedding*, from Molnar's legitimate play "Great Love"—Richard Thorpe directing. Joan Crawford, Franchot Tone, Robert Young and Reginald Owen in *The Bride Wore Red*, scripted from "The Girl from Trieste" and directed by Dorothy Arzner, only woman director in Hollywood. Joseph Mankiewicz produces both.

Florence Rice . . . featuring in *Double Wedding* . . . well on her way up the ladder. Daughter of Grantland Rice, America's ace sports writer and commentator, began her stage career with three successive comedies, *June Moon*, *Once in a Lifetime* and *She Loves Me Not*.

Eddie Quillan, winner of Academy Award for his feature part in *Mutiny on the Bounty*, making screen come-back in *The Umbrella Man*, currently shooting with George Murphy, Rita Johnson, and Leo Carrillo. Quillan interested himself in the Hollywood Little Theatre movement in his vacation from the studio, producing plays to keep his dramatic technique up to scratch. Plays juvenile lead in *The Umbrella Man*, William Thiele directing.

Freddie Bartholomew and Mickey Rooney together again in *Thoroughbreds Don't Care*.

## 20th Century-Fox

Gregory Ratoff, versatile writer-actor-director, directing *Lancer Spy*, Marte McKenna's sequel to *I Was a Spy*, with Peter Lorre and Dolores del Rio.

Born in Samara, Russia, Ratoff was trained for business at Imperial School of Commerce, Petrograd . . . became Moscow Art Theatre's best-known character actor. Later held *Blossom Time* for two years on Broadway . . .went to Hollywood, writing *Sins of Man* and *Cafe Metropole* for Fox, and currently *You Can't Have Everything*, musical now on the editing bench.

Among 66 features promised for the coming season: *In Old Chicago*, with Alice Faye, Tyrone Power and Don Ameche; *Hudson Bay Company* (a unit has gone to Canada for location shooting); *Stanley and Livingstone* (Osa Johnson, widow of Martin Johnson, heading a party now in Africa for local colour); *Second Honeymoon*, with Tyrone Power and Loretta Young; *Moonstruck*, with the Ritz Brothers; *Ali Baba Goes to Town* and *Saratoga Chips* with Eddie Cantor; *Mother Knows Best*, with the Dionne Quintuplets; a series of *Mr. Moto* films with Peter Lorre; and *Suez* for Simone Simon.

## Paramount

Unit aboard three-masted schooner *Golden Gate* off Cataline Isle getting marine and shipboard scenes for *Ebb Tide* . . . colour expert Robert C. Bruce supervising. Picture stars Oscar Homolka, Frances Farmer and Barry Fitzgerald. James Hogan directs.

Homolka's next part will be a hard-boiled sergeant of *Beau Geste* in the colour re-make prepared by Lucien Hubbard. George Raft, Ray Milland and Richard Arlen set as three brothers.

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W. C. Fields joining up with the *Big Broadcast of* 1838 cast. *That Man's Here Again* and *Things Begin to Happen* to follow.

## Radio

Big picture here is *Stage Door*, directed by Gregory La Cava. Anthony Veiller scripted from stage play by George Kaufman and Edna Ferber—he did the same job on *Michael Strogoff*, *Winterset*, *A Woman Rebels* and *The Ex-Mrs. Bradford*. Cast includes Ginger Rogers, Katharine Hepburn, Gail Patrick, Adolphe Menjou, Andrea Leeds and Constance Collier.

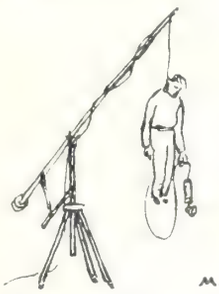
Kurt Neuman, responsible for Bobbie Breen's two pictures to date, directs the boy star again in *Make a Wish* . . . Marion Claire, Basil Rathbone and Ralph Forbes in supporting cast. In same studios William Seiter directing Gene Raymond and Harriett Hilliard in *The Life of the Party*—and James Ellison and Marsha Hunt starring in *Annapolis Salute* (original story and direction by Christy Cabanne).

## Columbia

Grace Moore and Melvyn Douglas at work on *The Sound of Your Voice*, comedy drama by novelist Stephen Morehouse Avery (he wrote screen play of *The Gorgeous Hussy*).

Francis Lederer and Madeleine Carroll starring in *Thanks for Everything* (title changed from *Thanks for Nothing*). Grace Bradley in supporting cast.

## France



From the studios: Marcel Carné, once assistant of Jaques Feyder and director of *Jenny*, finishing *Drole de Drama* . . . Tourjansky shooting *Le Maître de Poste* with Harry Baur; Pierre Chenal *Alibi*, with Stroheim; Marc Allegret *J'Accuse* . . . Julien Duvivier finished *Un Carnet de Bal*. And the following films are announced: *Le Roi de Bagnol* for Marcel Pagnol; *Altitude* 3200 for Jean Benoit-Lévy; *Le Diamant Bleu* for Victor Trivas; and *Une Femme au Bout du Monde* for Jean Epstein.

Nearly forty cinemas have been opened at the Paris Exhibition, representing various countries. Russia claims the largest, having 400 seats—others include Germany (240 seats), Denmark (200 seats), Belgium (175 seats), Switzerland, Roumania, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands, Luxemburg, etc. Britain is not represented, other than in the International Gala presentation of the Cinema.

Le Palais de la Découverte is showing scientific films—*Les Cycles de la Nature*, by Jean Painlevé (after the theories of the Italian mathematician Vito Volterra on mathematic biology); two other purely mathematical films by Painlevé, shot in collaboration with M. Dufour, *La Quatrième Dimension* and *La Similitude des Longeurs et des Vitesses*. There are also astronomical films by Painlevé and Leclerc and a meteorological film by Devoux.

La Palace de la Lumière is exhibiting films by Jean Tedesco, Jean Benoit-Lévy and J. C. Bernard, which by a new process known as "Hypergonar" will be projected on to a large wall, 120 feet long and 30 feet high.

## Germany

Plenty of activity at Ufa's Neubablesberg studios . . . director Karl Ritter busy supervising the construction of a village street for *Unternehem Michael* ("The Michael Enterprise")—Matthias Wiemann in the lead. Georg Jacoby shooting interiors for his peasant comedy *Spiel auf der Tenne* ("Play on the Thrashing Ground"), scripted by Alois Lippl from his own play . . . exteriors shot in Bavaria. Erich Washneck turning on *Streit um den Knaben Jo* ("Dispute About the Boy Jo"), with Lil Dagover and Willy Fritsch. Lilian Harvey co-starring with Willy Birgel in her second film for the company, *Fanny Elsner*—a biography of the dancer. Paul Martin directing.

Other films before the cameras—*Daphne und der Diplomat* ("Daphne and her Diplomat"), directed by Robert A. Stemmle; *Der Landstreicher* ("The Tramp"), directed by Carl Lamac; *Die Gelbe Flagge* ("The Yellow Flag") by Gerhard Lamprecht; *Die Warschauer Zitadelle* by Fritz Peter Buch, and *Gueule d'Amour*, produced by a French production staff.

Françoise Rosay . . . starring in *Mein Sohn, der Herr Minister* . . . wife of Jaques Feyder and star of his picture *La Kermesse Héroïque*. Brought up in France, trained for the stage and opera. Made first film in America . . . the German version of Buster Keaton's *Casanova Despite Himself* . . . later made French films in Germany, spotted by Karl Ritter and engaged for character part in *Die Insel* ("The Island"), followed by *Pension Mimosa* and *La Maternite*. *La Kermesse* brought her international fame.

## Japan

Five hundred films to be made in Japan next season, according to Nagamasa Kawakita, head of Towa Shoji-Kaisha, Tokyo distributors. "This number of pictures is necessary," Kawakita said, "because of double or triple bills in the country. For sixpence, patrons can sit through a show lasting five hours."

Approximately three hundred American features shown in Japan each year at present. Favourite stars: Marlene Dietrich, Greta Garbo, Shirley Temple, Clark Gable, Robert Taylor, Gary Cooper. 1,600 cinemas now operating in the country, some seating 4,000.

## Austria

Outlook for the industry brightening . . . eleven pictures planned for June to December, against only two made first half of the year. Fritz Hirt of Berlin Tobis, after long consultations with Reich Film Chamber, obtained a permit to show Austrian films throughout Germany—provided they comply with the German Aryan laws. Eight of the pictures planned to be made by Tobis Sascha and three by Selenophon. Paula Wessely to star in two and Willy Forst in one.

A film boosting German aerial achievement and featuring the Graf Zeppelin, which Forst was to produce, has been indefinitely postponed owing to the Hindenburg disaster.

# *Review of the Month*

## ★ *Under the Red Robe*

(Victor Seastrom—20th Century-Fox.)
Conrad Veidt, Annabella, Raymond Massey, Romney Brent, Sophie Stewart.

The period film, we are continually being told (by people in the industry, not the public), is dead. And the period film, hardier than the prophets, continues for the delight of the romantically-inclined in an unromantic age. The coming of colour may be expected to give it a new vogue, perhaps the greatest vogue it has ever enjoyed. Heaven send us producers endowed with discerning colour sense, or we shall lose the art of the screen in a riot of gaudy hues.

Handled with such discernment, *Under the Red Robe* would have made a good colour film. But for amends there were Georges Périnal and James Wong Howe at the cameras. This is a film to enjoy if you have a heart for swashbuckling. Personally, I think the infallibility of the story-book hero is just plain, darned silly, but the romantic historical novel never made the ghost of a concession to small-minded realists. D'Artagnan, Gil de Berault, the Scarlet Pimpernel and the rest of that heartening company of yore still occupy, I suppose, a place in the dim recesses of memory's gallery, whence they are wont to emerge, rebuking our latter-day cynicism and sophistry, at the bidding of a film such as this. And if it accomplishes an hour's return to the zest with which we once discovered Stanley Weyman and the rest, why, then, it must seem very well worth while.

"Under the Red Robe"

*Under the Red Robe* has an imposing cast. Nobody better than Conrad Veidt could have been found for Gil de Berault. If he wears the slouch hat with the long feathers in it, he is as far as a granite statue from ever becoming pixilated. His feet seem born to bear the jackboot and the spur, and it is Conrad of the gleaming eye all the time. Perhaps it is a shame to put Veidt up as a swashbuckler, but restraint gives credibility to every inch of his performance. It certainly was a pity to give Raymond Massey the upturned moustache of Cardinal Richelieu. Doubtless it was not to be helped, but I can assign to no other reason a loss of dramatic stature. He hasn't quite the presence, and walks too quickly, and leaves his admirers to fall back upon the recollection of that brief but marvellously sinister achievement of his as the King of Spain in *Fire Over England*.

Annabella is the Lady Marguerite, and here again is the quality of restraint in perfection. A very calm and lovely actress is Annabella. The rather dimpled charm of Sophie Stewart as Elise goes well beside her.

*Under the Red Robe* was produced by the American Robert T. Kane, and directed by Victor Seastrom, who is Swedish. James Wong Howe is Japanese, Veidt was born in Berlin, Annabella in Paris, and Massey in Toronto. But it was made at Denham Studios and Sophie Stewart was born in Perthshire, which entitles it to be regarded as one of the British-cosmopolitan films.

—*The Birmingham Mail*

The picture pursues its narrative rather more solemnly than we should have preferred, blunting its melodramatic edges against dull stretches of action and dialogue and sacrificing much of its romantic vigour to the inescapable maturity of its hero. For all that, it has its moments. You will find them predominantly in the scenes involving Raymond Massey's Cardinal Richelieu and Romney Brent's roguish manservant, Marius. Mr. Massey rescues the Cardinal from the elfin grasp of Mr. Arliss, presenting him in full panoply of ruthlessness and implacability. Mr. Brent's Marius, an amusing little scamp, serves to relieve the dour monotony of Mr. Veidt's performance and gives the film its much-needed comic relief. With more of Mr. Massey and Mr. Brent, with a bit more lightness in the script and with a younger man than Mr. Veidt to carry the central rôle, *Under the Red Robe* might have been a grand romance. As it is, it's just a bit to the credit side of average.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

## ★ *Make Way for To-morrow*

(Leo McCarey—Paramount.)
Beulah Bondi, Victor Moore, Fay Bainter, Thomas Mitchell, Barbara Read.

There are no stars. The two principal characters are in their seventies, married fifty years.

The ending is logical, leaving you with a fervent wish that things should magically change—the same wish we so often have in life.

These facts make it at once an unorthodox film. It is also an uncommonly good one.

It is the story of three months in the lives of this simple old couple. They call their married children together, and tell them quite frankly that they have no money, that their small-town home is to be taken from them.

Don't imagine this is a tear-brimming "Over the Hill." With Victor Moore as the father there is a wealth of humour. The right kind of humour that has pathos in it.

Beulah Bondi, as the old lady, gives the character balance and thus points the family's problems with desperate clarity. There is fine acting, too, from Thomas Mitchell and Fay Bainter, and an attractive sketch of cheeky adolescence by Barbara Read.

There have been few films with so many chances of being insufferable, but this one edges round them all and turns out movingly bittersweet. —Stephen Watts, *The Sunday Express*

This is a maundering, melancholy story, humped flabbily together after the manner of a mud-pie, slapped on the silver trowel of sentimentality, and extended for your kind inspection with the label: "Drama as big as life itself, brought to the screen by Paramount in the most appealing story of the age. It's the story for everyone, because it's everyone's own story." Please, is it? How many of my elder married readers (if I have any) with oodles of children (if they have any) remember suffering the brazen insult, the blackguard injury experienced by Victor Moore and Beulah Bondi in *Make Way for To-morrow?* At most, I hear one whispered "Yes," one furtive "What about King Lear?" But everybody—for this is everybody's "own story"? No, no, a thousand times no! And, even if it does happen, we don't want to see it happen on the pictures, unless the tale is told with a Shakespearean strength, a decent restraint and no hint of the morbidity that moans: "Melancholy for melancholy's sake!" Even a happy ending is denied us. For we leave Miss Bondi turning tearfully to her Home for the Aged, and Mr. Moore turning just as tearfully towards distant California in the knowledge that they will never see one another again—and in the pious hope that this picture *will* make way for to-morrow. It certainly deserves to run no longer.

—Paul Dehn, *The Sunday Referee*

*Critical Summary.*

*Opinions were sharply divided over this picture. The sentiment was generally considered to be excessive, but nevertheless many critics shared Stephen Watts' view that a difficult subject had been handled with real poignancy. The "New York Times" considered it likely to be one of the ten best pictures of* 1937. (*See also appraisal of Direction on page* 10.)

**W.F.N. Selection**

*Make Way for To-morrow* * * *

*Night Must Fall* * *

*The Mill on the Floss* *

*Parnell* *

*They Gave Him a Gun* *

***Other Films Covered in this Issue***

*Under the Red Robe*

*Nancy Steele is Missing*

*The Woman Between*

*La Mort du Sphinx*

*Paris Commune*

*Mr. Flow*

*Der Herrscher*

## ★ *The Mill on the Floss*

(Tim Whelan—National Provincial.)
Frank Lawton, Victoria Hopper, Geraldine Fitzgerald.

*The Mill on the Floss*, George Eliot's tale of the family feuds of the Wakems and the Tullivers looks rather artificial stuff on the screen, and as a record of the novel the film is not helped by a change of ending. The film is saved, however, by the presence of a first-rate cast, in which the acting of the younger generation of players is as unforced and natural as that of the older generation is forced and incredible. Frank Lawton makes a winning figure of the hero, and Victoria Hopper is admirably cast as the sweet-natured Lucy. Maggie Tulliver is played by Geraldine Fitzgerald, whom you may recall in *Turn of the Tide*. Her performance here is a lovely thing, both in its outward movements and in its hints of spiritual grace, sincere and moving from beginning to end. Her beauty is not the usual shop-made stuff of the screen; she is real and vivid, and her personality is such that it is difficult to take your eyes off her when she is on the screen. Tim Whelan, experienced American director (he graduated in the Mack Sennett school) has directed the tale from outside rather than from within, and he is happier in the excitements of flood at the climax than in the building of atmosphere in the more leisurely parts of the film.

—Frank Evans, *The Newcastle Evening Chronicle*

*Critical Summary.*

*A star has been awarded to this picture simply because of the excellence of Miss Geraldine Fitzgerald's performance.*

## ★ *Nancy Steele is Missing*

(George Marshall—20th Century-Fox.)
Victor McLaglen, Walter Connolly, Peter Lorre, June Lang.

Victor McLaglen, serving a 17-year sentence for assault and battery, causes prison riots by trying to force his militant pacifism down the throats of his fellow convicts. His one friend in the gaol is Peter Lorre; a killer with a sense of humour. But Lorre, seemingly such a pleasant cell mate, is really intent on discovering McLaglen's secret—a kidnapping job he did years before. McLaglen, you see, hates war but he loves his private fights. He hates war so much that he snatches the infant daughter of a munition king (Walter Connolly) and leaves her to be brought up in the country by some Irish friends.

The prison sentence intervenes. Out of gaol with his hair grey, he sets out to find the girl (June Lang), now a beautiful innocent of 19. But Lorre is on his track and there is slaughter in the end. Not for one moment does one have any sympathy for McLaglen. Worse still, one does not believe in the character at all. He rants and roars and fails to camouflage a great emptiness. A dullish picture.

—Ian Coster, *The Evening Standard*

Hollywood's attitude towards Big Business is well illustrated in *Nancy Steele is Missing*. At first it almost seems as if a genuine condemnation is to be made of war profiteering and the private sale of armaments. Victor McLaglen, as a confirmed pacifist, kidnaps the daughter of a millionaire armament magnate and is then sent to prison for a long sentence on another charge. His hatred of the millionaire, though fanatical, is understandable. It is only reasonable to expect that the millionaire will be the villain of the piece. But Big Business cannot be dealt with so sacrilegiously. Steele, the war profiteer in guns, is charity personified. He calls his chauffeur by his Christian name, and is generous and amiable towards all whom he meets. His private life is impeccable; it seems reasonably certain that he is kind to animals. And thus, in Hollywood, all is for the best in the best of best possible worlds and even a dealer in death turns out to have a heart of gold.

—*W.F.N.*

## ★ *Night Must Fall*

(Richard Thorpe—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
Robert Montgomery, Rosalind Russell, Dame May Whitty.

They tell me Robert Montgomery fought and bled to play the rôle of Danny in *Night Must Fall*. Mr. Montgomery is, if you follow the cinema at all, Hollywood's most beloved smart aleck, its most popular exponent of the nice young gentleman with a flair for repartee. Danny, of the Emlyn Williams stage play, is neither of these. He is a homicidal maniac of varying degrees of viciousness and ingratiation.

It is the amazingly sustained performance of Robert Montgomery which holds the film together. Action is almost at a standstill, and the sequences hardly ever wander from the Bramson house and garden. There is only that suggestion of malevolence at the beginning, and the merest curve of activity to create suspense. But it is this static quality that emphasises the rising horror I felt at Danny's incredible campaign.

The insolence and bravura in this Danny will shake the Robert Montgomery Fan Club to its very constitution. He is not a pretty figure, standing in front of his employer with his thumbs catching his pockets and a cigarette swinging from the corner of his mouth, deliberating the thrill of slaughter. But he's a commanding one, and that's up for commendation. His one horrid moment of fear after the departure of the detective is to me the high point of the film. And the high point, to date, of Mr. Montgomery's acting career.

—Katharine Best, *Stage*

It is difficult to imagine the suave polished, happy-go-lucky Robert Montgomery in the rôle of an egotistical murderer, feigning the dull-witted, slow-thinking country hotel porter, who, like most murderers, has a dual personality. He makes the change in Metro's version of Emlyn Williams' stage success, *Night Must Fall*.

I try to use superlatives sparingly, but I have no hesitation in saying that Montgomery's performance is the best he has ever given, and among the six best pieces of acting I have ever seen on the screen.

"Night Must Fall"

(*Night Must Fall—continued*)

His study is one of brilliant subtleties. With apparent ease he thrills and fascinates, suggesting the horror of a warped mind even in his most charming moments.

Emlyn Williams succeeded in getting into the mind of a type of murderer when he conceived the character of Danny; Montgomery shows you that mind with all its cunning, its simplicities and its egotistical imaginings.

—Richard Haestier, *The Star*

*Critical Summary.*

*Robert Montgomery's determination to forsake the inevitable playboy parts for a chance to act seems to have been altogether justified. His playing of Danny was very well received on both sides of the Atlantic. The casting of Miss Rosalind Russell did not receive so unanimous a vote.*

## ★ *Parnell*

(John M. Stahl—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
Clark Gable, Myrna Loy, Edna May Oliver, Edmund Gwenn.

*Parnell* is dull. It omits entirely the background of evictions, dynamitings, murders from ambush and all the fierce prejudice that formed the background of the era. Without that, *Parnell's* story loses its meaning. The result is a mixture of Uncle Tom, Dostoievsky and a high school tableau with a touch of Biblical allegory. Clark Gable and Myrna Loy are miscast. At moments they even look rather foolish. Gable, as Parnell, is incredible. Seated in the House of Commons, as leader of the Irish Party, he is a nineteenth-century collar "ad," making history and chasing Myrna Loy in a Committee Room. Nobody in America will care that Pigott, the blackmailer, who fled to Spain and actually committed suicide, is here made to shoot himself outside the English court room. Nobody will care that the eight or nine-year affair between Mrs. O'Shea and Parnell is condensed to a matter of months, or that numerous other liberties have been taken. In England and in Ireland, however, they may care.

—*Variety*

Trudging as I do to the movies year in and year out, I seem always capable of amazement at the amount of boredom they can arouse. Especially do I feel so in a case of this sort, where money has been spent to give the whole thing a rich setting, where persons of recognised talent have been employed in the making, where expert performers have been engaged for prominent rôles, and where history provides the kernel for drama and romance to a superlative degree. Perhaps, after all, the film is but a rebuke to idle pleasure-seekers. As such it is highly successful. In the first place, probably history provided a too heady situation for our discreet era. The affair of Mr. Parnell and the highly stimulating Mrs. Katie O'Shea presents problems that no nice movie functionary can pretend to understand. I must say that the two leading players, expert though they may be in their way, give not the slightest indication of trying to understand anything. Mr. Gable wears sideburns for the occasion and relies upon that adornment for the extra subtleties requisite to the stormy political career of Parnell. Miss Loy dons a bonnet and sheds a tear now and again. I should add that the romance, as presented on the screen, is persistently chaperoned, with affable humour, by the aunt, played by Edna May Oliver in her genteel mood.

—John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

"They Gave Him a Gun"

## ★ *The Woman Between*

(Anatole Litvak—Radio.)
Paul Muni, Miriam Hopkins, Louis Hayward, Colin Clive.

*The Woman Between* won't mean anything to art or commerce. It's just another tear-jerker, punctuated with bullets. Not that it's bad exactly. Muni's performance as the French airman, bearded and a trifle gauche, sensitive to his unpopularity, regarded by his comrades as a jinx because two of his observers have been killed, is a strong and convincing bit of work, at times really moving. Where *The Woman Between* falls down is in its detail. You have seen all the people, except possibly the bearded airman, a dozen times before; the humour is standardised Mack Sennett. Louis Hayward is tense and taut in the Noel Coward manner, and Miriam Hopkins, though by no means without talent, is unmistakably from that part of Gaul which lies south of the Mason and Dixon line.

—George Campbell, *The Bystander*

*The Woman Between* is an emotional story of a French air pilot and his observer in the Great War, the woman being the wife of the one and the mistress of the other.

Since this load of passion is too much for any one cinema airplane to carry, the lover is eventually shot down in the cockpit, leaving the future clear for technical felicity.

The film is from a French novel, *L'Equipage*, and is presented with frank American sentiment by a Russian director out of England and Austria. All the actors perform industriously, and cry a good deal at odd moments, for which you can hardly blame them. The sound effects men, though, and the composers of background music appear to enjoy themselves hugely, and the stunt fliers have a really grand time.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Observer*

## ★ *They Gave Him a Gun*

(W. S. Van Dyke—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
Spencer Tracy, Franchot Tone, Gladys George.

The time to make a noise about it will be when Spencer Tracy gives a bad performance. All that need be said now is that here he gives another admirable one. So does Franchot Tone in a part well away from his usual polished impudence. This time he is the subject of as extraordinary a sermon as Hollywood has ever preached. The text is that the U.S. Government, having taught its young men to use guns for 1917, automatically trained them to come back home and be gangsters. A logical projection of that thought surely is that Britain ought to be three years ahead of its gangster era. The acting is better than the story, and the story a mile ahead of its moral.

The best moment is Tracy, his eyes closed in calm reverie and a gun in his face, telling Tone what he thinks of him. Miss George I don't think is a film bet. You can take me up on that if I'm wrong. —Stephen Watts, *The Sunday Express*

*They Gave Him a Gun* is a vaguely intense Hollywood picture, half-war film and half gangster-film, with lots of background music, a blonde nurse, and a moral. The hero is a reluctant soldier who wins the Croix du Guerre for sniping Germans in 1916, and who comes home and starts sniping Americans in 1918. By 1936 he is a sniper

of New York business men on quite a large scale, and the moral seems to be that if you teach a man to use a gun he will simply keep on using it.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Observer*

## ★ *La Mort du Sphinx*

(Dr. Lewis Carls—French.)
Ingrid Bigum.

This film, adapted from M. Jean Cocteau's play, *La Mort du Sphinx*, is a very curious film which leaves at the end a large interrogation mark. Why was it ever produced? The one reasonable answer is that Miss Ingrid Bigum is given a chance to act, and act she does, but this once granted other subsidiary little question marks keep raising their inquisitive heads. If this film was to be made at all, why was it not made with a more severe intention and why was the story of Oedipus thrust almost into the background? Above all, why on earth was the matronly figure of a citizen of Thebes allowed to hold up the action for so long? Her acting was admirable, but it had nothing at all to do with the tragic story of Oedipus or of the intertwined mortal and immortal lives of the Sphinx. Mortally the Sphinx, as Miss Bigum shows her, is an impatient, pitiful person, longing for love and weary of killing, young, tender, almost adolescent. When she reveals herself to Oedipus as the Sphinx she is old, experienced, disillusioned in all except one thing—her need to be loved. In a long monologue, beautifully spoken and balanced, she pours out to him the long story of her life and practises and gives him the answer to the riddle which means death to the man who cannot answer it. At times *The Sphinx* is impressive but on the whole not impressive enough to justify the film. —*The Times*

It was not long ago that Jean Cocteau made his debut as a film director before the more intellectual sections of London's movie fans with *Le Sang d'un Poete*. This film caused a minor stir. In some quarters it was dubbed surrealist, in others pronounced meaningless; there was also a squeamish minority which departed from the auditorium with its handkerchiefs over its mouths. On the whole *Le Sang d'un Poete* was a piece of far-fetched good fun. But to seek undue profundity in its imagery would have been to take too seriously the trials and errors of a man whose trade was other than films.

A translated film version of Cocteau's play *La Mort du Sphinx* has now appeared in England. Cocteau himself, it seems, had no direct contact with the production. The play was adapted by Stuart Gilbert (noted for his book on James Joyce) and directed by Lewis Carls, with music by Georges Auric. Except for the central figure of the Sphinx, played by Ingrid Bigum, the small cast is wholly English.

The interest of *La Mort du Sphinx* lies, at least in part, in the smooth interweaving of contemporary reference with a classical theme. Its situations, especially when translated into terms of film, call for a modicum of flippancy and coarseness in their handling. They demand, in most cases, an approach closer to the spirit of music-hall than to that of Greek drama.

It is therefore regrettable that the film should be so obviously governed by an enormous reverence for its original. It is permeated with a spirit of discipleship which tunes it to a false aesthetic pitch. Thus Stuart Gilbert's adaptation consists in little more than a mere removal of un-essential dialogue, while Lewis Carls' direction gives the appearance of being dictated by a consuming fear lest each of the remaining lines should pass without its due weight. Auric's music, which could have played a fundamental part in the dramatic construction of the film is confined to a few insignificant passages, mostly of a punctuative nature. The result is a pompous, stagey affair, full of the odour of sanctity and outrageously dull.

There is no reason why this should have been so. The Cocteau play contains much of the stuff of imaginative movie and his writing is vivid, pointed, and at times racy. In addition his theme touches on one of the major stories of all time. Opportunities were not lacking, and the names of the production team should have been a guarantee that they would be taken. Or should they? The feeling lingers that the film represents an excursion into a foreign field of a group of intellectuals whose native media lie elsewhere. Maybe there is something in professionalism after all.

## ★ *Paris Commune*

(Gregory Roshal—Russian.)
N. Plotnikov, A. Maximova, A. Abrikosov, V. Stanitzin.

*Paris Commune* is a lacklustre, awkwardly directed and generally tedious piece of historical sugar-coating. With a transparent list to port and a patriotic fist conveniently clamped over one eye, the Soviet looks at the abortive insurrection in Paris in 1871, directly after the Franco-Prussian War, and pretends it was the idealistic precursor to the Red revolution. It is all glory for the Paris Commune and for those who died fighting for it on the barricades. And yet—although the filmmakers charitably ignore the debauchery, brutality and vandalism of the commune—it is unable to hide, even in this subjective treatment, inklings of the stupidity, ineptness and confusion of the revolution's leaders. To this extent it is an accurate picture of a bloody and worthless sixty-five days' war. Aside from our factual scruples, there remains the more cogent objection that *Paris Commune* is a singularly dispirited, over-attenuated and static motion picture. It emerges as the flat record of a revolution fought by soap-box orators and directed by misfits. None of the players deserves special mention, but its director, Gregory Roshal, does: he has much to learn.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

## ★ *Mr. Flow*

(Robert Siodmak—French.)
Edwige Feuillère, Fernand Gravey, Louis Jouvet.

French crook drama is a screen rarity. I found this interesting partly on that account, but more because of the very attractive and intelligent young actress, Edwige Feuillère. There is a strong boudoir flavour to the complicated non-moral pilot of a lady thief and a barrister who becomes entangled in every way. Some good Deauville scenes and fascinating acting by a clever cast are put over by a technique which I like chiefly because it has so little in common with either Hollywood or Denham.

—P. L. Mannock, *The Daily Herald*

**Emil Jannings** **"Der Herrscher"**

## ★ *Der Herrscher*

(Veit Harlan—German.)
Emil Jannings, Marianne Hoppe.

*Der Herrscher* is a good, strong drama in which the German passion for accuracy and precise detail is used to good purpose except in the opening. This is a burial scene, in which the emotionalism is laid on with a trowel. Once this is over, the picture becomes intensely interesting. It reveals a psychologically correct building of character. Being of German origin, the story is unrelieved by those flashes of humour which British or American production would have given it. But its very grimness gives it a strength that becomes an additional quality. Here and there, an attempt to please Der Fuhrer is disclosed. The almighty eminence of the State and the good of the people above the good of the individual are emphasised, but not obnoxiously. One rather smiles.

—Richard Haestier, *The Star*

Jannings is a dominating steelworks magnate who is used to having his own way. He falls in love with his young secretary, proposes to her and rounds on his family when they insult her because they wanted his money.

For the most part the film is a family row, by a set of quite unpleasant people, pictured with little regard to convincing characterisation and put there mainly to give Jannings the chance of building up to a powerful scene, as he has done many times in the past.

He acts well, but the general lack of human values and the flood of dialogue prevent the picture from being really satisfying.

—A. Jympson Harman, *The Evening [illegible]*

## Sorry you've been troubled!

*"Stars are just merchandise to me—they're canned and sent all over the country; liked baked beans."—Robert D. Wilby, cinema-owner, of Atlanta, Georgia.*

There's only one improvement we can make to that crack, Mr. Wilby. You should have said "half-baked."

But we may as well face up to the fact, kiddies, that that is just how our stars *are* sent all over the country. And that, also, is how they are brought to you by Uncle Exhibitor, the man who owns your cinema.

Lean back, little ones, and shake the hair out of your ears while I tell you just how Uncle Exhibitor does it.

Waking from a heavy stupor induced by smoking too many free cigars, he realises that it is Market Day and he must go out shopping. For there are no films in the larder and he has so many tiny mouths to feed, great big maternal thing that he is.

So he takes his little shopping basket and off he skips to market, pausing only to write a few rude words on a wall or to kick some defenceless dog in the slats.

Soon he is at the Film Grocer's shop (shall we call him the Distributor, just for fun ?)

"Good morning, Mr. Distributor," he lisps.

"Good morning, my little man," says the Distributor, smiling indulgently and patting the little man across the ear with a can of banned film. "And what can I do for you?"

"I want some baked beans," says the Exhib.

"Why yes," comes back the Distributor. "The same as last time, of course?"

The Exhibitor sucks his thumb sulkily.

"The last lot I had from you was bad," he petulates.

"Oh, it was, was it?" says the other, sharp like. "It's the same as you always have."

"I know. But the customers say it made them feel sick."

"Listen, sweetheart," says the Distributor, stamping hard on the Exhibitor's toe; "you tell your customers they can take what I give 'em, and like it. Why, do you know there are some people who never see pictures at all? Take the Orkneys——"

"Couldn't you send them by your van?" asks the Exhib.

"In the Orkneys they never see motion pictures, much." Here a big tear rolls down the Distributor's cheek and burns a hole in the counter.

Touched by this, the Exhibitor scampers off, his little basket bulging in the most exciting way with his tins of baked beans. And once he's got them home, it takes him no time to present them to you in a big sticky glutinous meal which lasts for several hours and is guaranteed to linger for many more in that enormous hollow tooth known as the movie-goer's mind.

You must excuse me now. I'm off to the Orkneys.

## GIRLS, PLEASE!

*A headmistress at the recent conference of the Association of Headmistresses at Brighton, asked whether the talkies had contributed to the ruin of taste in English.*

*"Our whole soul revolts," she said, "against the abbreviations of alien growth and the soulless inventions of such vulgarities as 'debunk.'"*

Monica, Monica, *please*,
We know that your're rather a tease—
But now you're a prefect you really must take
Your language in hand, for the other girls' sake.
Only last Tuesday, at tea
I heard you exclaiming "Sez me!"
And as your Headmistress I say that it hurts
When you answer my questions by saying "Aw nerts."

Monica, Monica, dear,
Explain to me, now that your're here
What is meant by your saying "you'll debunk the Head"?
Does it mean you intend to pull me from my bed?
For the good of your colleagues in class
I can't let such crudities pass—
And I don't think it speaks very well for our coll.,
When you call the games-mistress a "four-flushing moll."

Monica, Monica, curb
The use of such horrors as "blurb"
The rest of the staff and myself are not sure,
But we feel that the word sounds distinctly impure.
And Monica, Monica, pray
What do you mean when you say
That you'll make Elsie Higgins "come clean?" For our regs.
Say a bath every day for the girls of St. Peg's.

Monica, Monica, check
Such sayings as "pain in the neck."
We don't mind occasional rags in the dorm,
But we *do* think your language a trifle too warm.
For Monica, Monica, dear,
It doesn't just jar on the ear—
It will look oh! so bad in your English exam,
And now get to hell out of here—go on scram!

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(*Continued from Column Three*)

in a few years' time. All around us will be the new generation of cinemagoers—grown-ups; booing, hissing and cheering without restraint. We may be just a bunch of dumb, comatose old fluffs, but if anyone starts booing, hissing or cheering around us, there had better be a doctor in the house. One who can fix fractures.

We take our films seriously. Like Miss Lejeune.

**"Do not disturb me."**—*Mae West.*
**HOW ARE THE MEATY FALLEN!**

## For the Little Ones

### (Not you Mr. Hitchcock)

*Britain's children may soon have their own cinemas, with their own "C" films, and with signs posted up: "No Grown-ups Admitted."—News Item.*

A pretty kettle of fish, I must say. After all, what's good enough for our children should be good enough for us, what? Or is this the kind of conversation we will have to listen to from our progeny as they sip a stiff Scotch apiece on their return from the movies:

Michael: Pretty lousy picture, eh, Monica?

Monica: Definitely erotic. But I can't say I was convinced by that drug-taking scene.

Michael: Good lord, no. That woman had obviously never been really coked in her life.

Monica: Rather pathetic. Not a bad jag the hero goes on, though. He got pretty nicely bazooned.

Michael: Not really crying drunk, though. Like I was on Speech Day.

Monica: Not so loud, old boy. Here are the parents on their way to bed. You know how they dream if we tell them anything. I've got rather a ripping chapter of Freud to finish and I'm for hitting the hay myself. It's been one hell of a day.

And listen to this:

*"Far too many mothers fail to realise that their children would be happier going by themselves. Alone, they boo, hiss, shout, cheer and laugh without restraint. There is no danger—in this way—of their developing into the dumb, comatose type represented by the average cinemagoer."*

—An official of the British Film Institute.

Well, that's just dandy. Going to the pictures is evidently going to be a lot of fun

(*Continued at Foot of Previous Column*)

# LORUM

## By Rodney Hobson

### Taboo or not Taboo

*Hollywood has been surveying the world market and finding the outlook, mainly for political and censorship reasons, discouraging. The producer's problem is that every country has different taboos.*

*France does not object to an individual French villain, but will not tolerate a reflection on the French nation. Italy will not accept an Italian character who is not the hero.*

*China complains that Chinese are usually shown as coolies. Quebec will not allow even a reference to divorce. Japan will tolerate no reflection on authority. Scandinavia bans crime and cruelty.*

*Great Britain is regarded as touchy in the matter of cruelty to animals and bedroom scenes.—News Item.*

You will never win the Frenchman's homage
If you show too many of them as being pieces
of fromage.

Though all Italians at heart are Neroes
They prefer to see themselves as heroes.

If you show one of their compatriots as a
coolie
A Chinese audience gets quite unroolie.

In order to appeal to the Teuton
Never show a character with a Non-Aryan
seut on.

If your dialogue mentions a decree nisi
Your reception in Quebec will be isi.

The Japs
Are authority-loving chaps.

For Scandinavia
Your characters should be on their best
behavia.

And if there's one thing a British audience is
constantly dreading
It's a picture that gives them even a glimpse
of bedding.

### Sayings

"In every woman there is a little of the angel and a little of the devil."
—*Ernst Lubitsch*

Sure you mean a *little* of the latter, Mr. Lubitsch?

"Clothes should not be important to an actress."—*Dita Parlo*

Really, Miss Parlo! And just as we were getting our actresses accustomed to wearing them again.

### SHUT UP CECIL !

There stood host Cecil Beaton illuminated alternately by flares from incessant fireworks and the flashes of photographers' lamps. He wore a white dress, covered with vegetation and beetles, but composed chiefly of broken eggs—egg shells broken in half with complete white and yolk glazed to the costume.

By the end of the evening Mr. Beaton had changed his fancy dress three times—ending up as a scarecrow.—*News Item*

No need to have changed three times if you wanted to finish up as a scarecrow, Mr. Beaton.

* * *

**Mrs. Greiser's little boy Snooks, W.F.N.'s malicious lift-boy, put Lord Strabolgi on the spot yesterday.**

*Snooks:* "So you are advocating not only British control, but also British policy for the Industry, hey?"

*Lord S.:* "We owe it to our compatriots—"

*Snooks:* "No more films about Vienna or the South Seas, hey?"

*Lord S.:* "Don't misunderstand me—."

*Snooks:* "And what's going to happen to the Argentines, the Americans and the Greeks who run the racket? Only Englishmen can starve like gentlemen. Third floor, unexplored avenues, sound bases, unturned stones, and *World Film News*."

### O, Tell Me the Inside Story

Animated diagrams of a skeleton drinking from a glass, showing the various digestive processes, and X-ray moving pictures of the movements of the lungs, are among the many films used in this country in the modern practice of medicine.—*News Item.*

Accustomed as we are
To gazing upon the usual exposed portions
of a film-star—
Such as the eyes, ears, nose, etcetera—
We feel that it would be a lot betterer
If, by this X-ray idea,
We could peer
Into the internal workings of these fascinating
creatures
Instead of at their more obvious features.
How much better to witness,
As a change from mere pritness,
The effect upon a film-queen's digestion
Of the suggestion
That there are some very interesting etchings
upstairs,
If she cares ? . . .
Or to watch the reaction of her left lung
To an embrace from, shall we say, Robert
Young ?
And we might
Also be vouchsafed the delight
Of studying the inside
Of a film-star who has had to swallow his
pride—
Which, if we guess rightly,
Would pack it pretty tightly.

**" But don't you *want* to be a star, Miss Postlethwaite ? "**

# NEWSREEL RUSHES

## "A Wide Open Letter to Mr. G. T. Cummins . . . Editor of British Paramount News"

## by Glen Norris

**This is the first of a series of articles in which our contributor submits the British Newsreels to candid and constructive criticism.**

**W.F.N. publishes this as a valuable discussion of the merits and faults of our reels, although we do not necessarily endorse every opinion of the writer. Mr. G. T. Cummins will no doubt have something to say in reply to the comments in this article.**

Dear Mr. Editor Cummins,

I am deeply interested in the newsreels. I firmly believe that some day they will find a way of really showing the world all the important and exciting things, in the tremendous marching pageant of history in the making. But I don't kid myself that any of Britain's reels are doing that now. All of them are much too much alike in repeating year after year the same sporting and military calendar—the same formula of "Derby—Trooping the Colour—Wimbledon." By living in continuous holy terror of the controversial boo or hiss, they achieve too great a uniformity of dullness. It's almost as if they had a secret agreement amongst themselves not to compete in finding the most dramatic stories. But even in the narrow field in which they work, each of our five reels has its own subtle flavour—each is stamped with the personality of its commentators and cutters, and above all, of its editor. You have brought many shining qualities to Paramount. I think your shoulders are also broad enough to bear the burden of some of its faults.

### Planned Shooting

I'm told that you were once a cameraman. Maybe that's why camera work is the outstanding feature of your reel. Obviously your past experience enables you to pick the best men to put behind your cameras, to plan every detail of your shooting ahead, and thus to achieve an ordered dovetailing of the work of several men on the same story. You visualise your story on a mental screen, days before the shooting begins. Some months back, I remember a little story that in itself hadn't much in the way of drama or beauty—just two or three R.A.F. flying boats taking off on some routine long distance flight. But your cameras made it a thrilling experience—with close-ups of flashing propellors, and foam framed floats, and skimming water, and the urgent faces of pilots. It was a miniature speed symphony—*made* by the picture. And Paramount's annual news programme is filled with such sparkling items.

### Exclusive Feature

But even the finest shooting, and the best plans, go wrong with badly designed or out-of-date equipment—and here too I suspect that your past experience has a great deal to do with Paramount's lead on the battle front. Time and again, in front of Buckingham Palace or at the Aldershot Tattoo, I have been struck with the neatness, compactness, elasticity, and portability of your camera and sound units. Time and again, I have heard rival cameramen grunt over the lip of a glass: "If I make a mess of it I can always blame the old camera—but those poor Paramount lads haven't an alibi in the world."

A piece of equipment, experimental, and at the moment, I believe, exclusive to Paramount, is a portable camera dolly—a form of tripod on wheels. With it the camera can "walk around" while actually shooting. A few recent striking dolly shots: a model of a ship in a glass case, with the camera slowly moving round it, like an idle spectator; the effect of "roaming the decks" of a battleship during the Coronation Naval Review; the camera gliding towards some top-hatted gentleman as if saying "excuse me, but would you care to say a word or two," then stopping at the close-up for a camera interview. I predict that Paramount's dolly experiment will soon be widely adopted.

### Organisation for Speed

Once the pictures are "in the can," the final success of the job depends on the speed with which the negative can be rushed back to London. Twelve hours lost—and it may not even be worth developing. Twelve hours gained—and it may make headlines. For, like a newspaper, a newsreel scooping its rivals with a big story, reaps its reward in prestige and publicity—and here, too, Paramount is often in the winning class.

Your world-wide network for collecting and transporting film is a wonder and a thorn to all who compete against it. Is it a funeral in Omsk Litomsk? You find a plane to fly the pictures back a little faster. Is it the weekly trans-Atlantic newsreel race? Maybe you still remember the story of how, at the U.S. end, they all missed the "Queen Mary" by inches. The others sat back to wait for the "Normandie," sailing a couple of days later. But meanwhile the Paramount transport sleuths found an obscure Italian cargo boat, leaving within an hour, and with just a chance of playing tortoise and hare with the "Normandie." On her way home, the Italian called at some small Irish port—the films were landed, thrown to a waiting plane, and with the "Normandie" steaming down the Channel, Paramount had beaten the field by ten hours!

### Faults?

Many a time, through the year, you get better pictures, and you get them on to the screens first. *And yet* . . . . Do you always make the best of those initial advantages? Do you always put over your stories in the newsiest, most effective way? I don't think so! I think there are faults in the make-up of your finished reel.

### Cutting

To me, your cutting still shows signs of the "old silent style." A hang-over from the days when the picture had to tell the story—and every detail had to be hammered home in close-up. Do you remember? The enemies meet at last—closer up of face with murderous intentions—close-up of terror-stricken victim—close-up of revolver being slowly drawn from pocket—and so on, for reel after reel. But in the modern, fast moving newsreel, the continuity of the story is covered by the commentator.

In its 100 feet, or less, the picture can, and should, do little more than illustrate the most telling incidents of the story—*and only those*. Every shot should be a super-shot—every cut-in should pull its weight in building up the atmosphere—every foot of film that falls below those standards should be junked. You still give us, in the name of continuity, far too many shots of closed cars dashing by, while we strain to glimpse the face inside—far too many shots of notabilities, almost wholly obscured by flunkeys, getting in and out of carriages—far too many cut-ins that are obviously posed. Never mind if you show The King in Edinburgh in one shot, and in Glasgow in the next. The commentator can carry the story across—and we shall applaud its speed. Above all, your reel needs more speed—and the first step in that direction would be to cut all those continuity "sustaining" shots—and leave their message to the commentator. I believe you would find that on an average one third of the footage of each story had been thrown overboard. Then you could set about filling up that length with more, newer, different, stories—and Paramount News would have the kick of a rocket.

### Commentary

Talking of commentaries—are yours good enough? I say commentaries—not commen*tators*. I am glad that you have two voices because I don't believe that a single one can cover the full range of emotions of the world's news. To your two voices I should even like to see added a third with a light, tripping quality for comedy, and a fourth, a bass, for big drama.

But above all, I should like to see a reform in the writing of the commentaries. How consistently we are forced to listen to a description of the obvious—to such supremely unnecessary remarks as "Prince Blank drives through the streets"; or "the vast crowd cheers"; or "His Majesty inspects the troops." How often, when a title superimposed on the picture tells us we are in

# NEWSREEL RUSHES

Paris, does the commentary take the word out of the title's mouth.

Your commentary writers consistently fail to realise that film commentary is not a form of radio description to blind listeners. It is a vocal counterpoint to a picture—and as such should deal with the more general implications of a story—its meaning, its place in history. Only rarely need film commentary point out a rapid or unclear bit of action in the picture—and then the description must come a second or two before the action, to allow for time lag in audience brains. When there's nothing to say—rather than hopeless vocal padding, far better for commentary to give place to sound and music.

### Sound and Music

Faster cutting, more informative commentary, will increase your speed 100 per cent. But your reel's final swing comes from music. Your sound units bring in thousands of feet of natural sound and music every week. But I don't believe you fully realise that ninety per cent of that track isn't sufficiently interesting to help build up your story. Certain sounds—the yells of the watchers at the Hindenburg burning, or the roar of the children at the Wembley Youth Festival—are tremendous in themselves. But the rest needs the artificial boost of added library music—music that is specially composed or arranged to provide atmosphere and rhythm. Your audience very soon reacts to the dullness of prolonged general traffic hubbub, or the continuous roar of a football crowd—yet these and similar sounds still play a regular part in your reel's make-up.

### Faster . . . Faster

All my criticism points in one main direction—your reel is *not fast enough.* I believe you will find that the key to *more speed* is *less repetition* —in cutting, through the elimination of all but the absolutely essential shots—in commentary, through the elimination of all wording that is already covered by the picture—in sound, by the elimination of repetitive general hubbub.

Yours sincerely,

Glen Norris.

**1.** *Following tear gas and shooting, demonstrators break and run*

## *Notes by the Commentator*

### Frightful Film

Biggest newsstory in America to-day, is the upheaval of labour, manifested in sit-downs, stand-ups, and all their variations. But during months of political tension, the American newsreels have found little dramatic material for their cameras. Fighting clashes have broken out too unexpectedly, and have been suppressed too quickly for anything but sheer luck to bring a camera within shooting distance. Last month luck smiled on Orlando Lippert, ace cameraman of U.S. Paramount News. Almost as if he smelled blood in the air, Lippert stayed behind in Chicago's steel suburb, while his rival cameras went off to the Indianapolis car race. Thus Paramount got a complete exclusive record of

**2.** *Policeman seen here goes for a fallen striker*

one of the bloodiest labour-police battles in U.S. history. So clearly does the negative show police brutality that it was immediately confiscated by the U.S. government, and American audiences will never see it.

A few of the less harrowing shots were released by British Paramount News in this country, and, although they are almost the least dramatic sections of the complete film, they are still amazing enough to qualify easily as the news pictures of the month. Shown: a shot of a policeman felling a man with a club, then continuing to strike the prostrate figure, before passing on to the next attack. Not shown: shots of the first line of strikers going down under a police volley, like grass under a scythe; a terrified girl clambering to escape over a heap of fallen men, then felled by a police club blow, later lifted into an ambulance, a crumpled, bleeding heap; a man shot through the spine and paralysed from the waist, unable to move his legs, raising his head like a tortoise and clawing the ground. In its report on the affair, the U.S. magazine *Time* quotes the comment of one man who saw the film: "It made me want to go out and bite a policeman."

**3.** *. . . and clubs prostrate body*

### Newsreel Cockalorum

A train ran into a siding at Swanley Junction near London. The coaches piled up into a hideous mess—out of which doctors and nurses dragged the bodies of the dead and dying. Paramount News' released the usual aftermath pictures—over them the commentator spoke words which Editor Cummins regarded as too obviously true to be controversial. General line of the commentary was that such a pile-up would largely have been avoided with steel coaches. But controversy raised its ugly head! The Association of Timber Manufacturers made a strong protest, implying that such propaganda as had been spoken by the Paramount commentator was likely to do considerable harm to the Timber Trade. If they were to continue to hold their own in a hard world, it was essential that timber should continue to be used for railway coaches. So far the obvious next moves have not taken place—but Paramount are daily expecting: a "revelation" that the commentator is really a big shareholder in a major steel company: a similar protest against damaging propaganda from the United Association of Undertakers and Coffin Builders.

### New Newsreel

For years newsreel editors have been saying: "If one reel closed down, another would open up. There'll always be room for five." Apparently they have never discussed whether there is room for six reels—but this question is soon to be tested. The recent news of the resignation of long time Universal Editor Cecil Snape, was soon followed by the announcement of a new newsreel. *National News*, when it starts up in October, will be under the financial control of the Sound City studio group, headed by Norman Loudon, Sound City Chairman. Snape will edit—in the, to him, unfamiliar world of natural sound. For unlike Universal, National News is to have its fleet of sound trucks. In a later issue of *W.F.N.* it is hoped to detail the policy of the new organisation.

Meanwhile at Universal, Managing Director Jeapes adds the editorship to his executive burden.

# PEOPLE WITH PURPOSES

## The Travel Association

EVERY day, every week, every month a stream of literature pours out from Government Department and political faction, uplift society and industrial group. Plans, ideas, notions for getting something (almost anything) done, provided nearly always that someone else does the getting done: the letter-box of anyone working in the field of propaganda is choked with plans for getting someone else to get something done.

But sometimes the receiver of this flood of unfulfilled plans is encouraged. This week, for example, a shy little booklet in pale green, emblazoned with a skimpy sort of lion with the face of an old man, and containing only two pages, has appeared. When one reads it, one can forgive a whole cascade of useless literature. For it contains a record by the Travel and Industrial Association of a steady and long-term campaign of film production and distribution.*

For all its shortness, the booklet holds, not a splurge of ideas of what *might* be done, but a neat set of paragraphs outlining an achievement of film making and distribution of which any organisation with ten times the money might be proud. For the Travel and Industrial Association, often, one imagines, discouraged by the inelastic imaginations of some of those who guide our national policies of propaganda, has built up a genuine and far-reaching international circulation of British films.

* Films of Britain: a Report of National Screen Publicity by The Travel and Industrial Development Association of Great Britain and Ireland.

The Travel and Industrial Association is financed by small grants from the Department of Overseas Trade, local authorities, certain cities and major industries, and by private subscription. Its object is to encourage a service of information about England to people overseas; not only holiday England, but industrial and commercial England as well. To achieve this object, the Association early turned to films, realising with imagination remarkable four years ago, and still all too rare, that films give access to the friendly and sympathetic interest of ordinary people. The Association has been restricted in finance, it has been shaken by the suspicions (equalled only on the Russian-Japanese border) of neighbouring seaside towns; it has been hampered by lack of sympathy on the part of

Government and industrial highhats who should know better. But under the guidance of L. A. de L. Meredith and A. F. Primrose and their colleagues, it has been persistent and active.

It started off film production by making two films somewhere about 1933 or 1934. They were *So This is London* and *So This is Lancashire*, but with their completion the Association's troubles were just beginning. It is easier to make films than to distribute them. So the Association set to work to create a system of distribution of its own. It found that it could handle a group of six films more easily than two. So, says the report, further films were therefore produced.

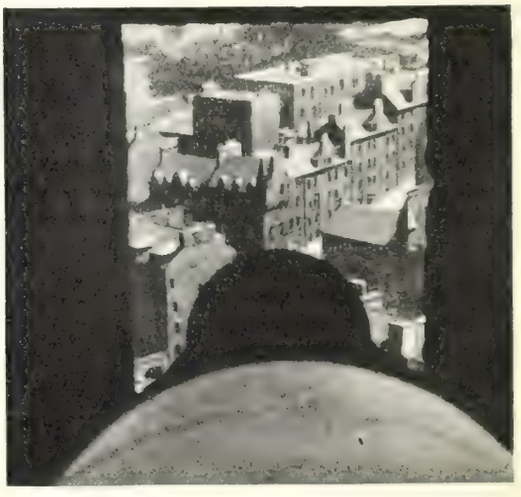
Just that, "further films were therefore produced." But what a struggle must be hidden in those few words. Two films were not successful by themselves. So they made some more in the face of goodness knows what derision and discouragement and gents of the old school of propaganda saying, "we must give them more bathing beauties." But a further batch of films produced by them, including *Beside the Seaside*, *For All Eternity*, and *The Key to Scotland* wiped, the supercilious smile off the face of the Association's critics. The Travel and Industrial Association persisted and succeeded.

To-day the Association is able to publish a list of twenty-eight countries which show its films in the public cinemas, and fifteen which show them non-theatrically. It has built up contacts with Anglo-Foreign Associations, and has recently circulated through the Foreign Office and the Department of Overseas Trade a list of documentary films available abroad. A Joint Committee of the British Council, the Travel and Industrial Association, the Foreign Office, the Department of Overseas Trade, the Film Institute and John Grierson (of Film Centre), has been set up under the chairmanship of Philip Guedalla to further its activities.

It is to be hoped that the Association's period of shoe-string finance is over. For now the Empire Marketing Board is dead, the Travel and Industrial Association is the only group not under obligation to specialised commercial or political interests in a position to make detached films reflecting the national life of the country.

ARTHUR ELTON.

*Stills from a Travel Association film of Edinburgh*

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## *(People with Purposes —contd.)*

**NEWS NOTES**

In France several railway companies, especially the State organisation, are using films for instructing their workers.

* * *

Glasgow: The Corporation Health Committee has accepted the offers of Pathé and Paramount for the supply of sound films required at the mental hospitals.

* * *

Ireland: A sub-committee has been appointed to the Gaelic League to investigate the possibilities of launching an all-Gaelic film company.

Films played an important part in this year's International Housing Exhibition in Dublin.

* * *

Leeds: Open-air daylight shows have been given by the National Government touring van.

* * *

The Akele of Abeokuta visited Film House, Wardour Street, with a view to purchasing equipment for his council hall in Abeokuta. The hall holds over 1,800 people.

* * *

Stirling: A film, partly in colour, is being made of the work of restoring the ancient Church of the Holy Rood, for showing at the Empire Exhibition in Glasgow next year.

* * *

The Moscow Newsreel Studio has commenced production on a series of documentary sound films on Moscow.

Studios of Moscow, Leningrad and Novosibirsk are making a number of educational films on Soviet geography.

* * *

The first railway travelling cinema coach to be used on the British railways has made more than 1,200 journeys and covered 250,000 miles; approximately 60,000 passengers have seen the programme, made up of sub-standard news and pictorial films (projected from the rear). The coach operates between King's Cross and Leeds on weekdays, and on excursion trains to Northern towns on Sundays. A second cinema coach has now been introduced on the King's Cross and Doncaster service.

A mobile cinema van touring stations and depots to demonstrate instructional films of railway management to railwaymen, introduced last November, has travelled 7,000 miles, visited 68 stations and depots, and given 450 performances to more than 12,000 members of the staff.

* * *

A talkie set has been installed at the George Shepherd Convent in Belfast. Hitherto the convent has been content with hiring a portable set at intervals—but in view of the success it has had, the full set has been purchased.

* * *

The Moscow Technical Film Studio has started two films on football. One is designed to acquaint the public with the basic principles of the game, the other is a full-length instructive film to improve the play of less-experienced teams.

* * *

Dr. Martin Leake of Cambridge University recently asked Gaumont-British Instructional to make a slow-motion film of a new pattern seed-drill which was theoretically perfect, but which in practice developed a fault that prevented the emission of seeds. The slow-motion film revealed the cause of the difficulty, thus enabling the mechanism to be perfected.

* * *

Six farms in the Lothians provided the locations for *A Pure Milk Supply*, a film made by members of the Edinburgh and East of Scotland Agricultural College, and directed by Dr. Andrew Cunningham. Dr. J. E. Gordon acted as cameraman. The film provides an authoritative account of the production of milk, coupled with an urgent appeal for cleanliness.

* * *

Messrs. F. G. Warne, Ltd., are making a 16 mm. film for the Bristol Development Board, which will be entitled *Bristol, City of a Thousand Years*. Mr. D. F. Taylor is making a film of Bath for the Travel Association.

* * *

The Police Surgeon of Hull, Dr. John Cumming, has made a film featuring the city's constabulary. It will be preserved at headquarters as a record for future screenings.

* * *

A new film of the Oxford Group movement, made at the recent demonstration at Utrecht, Holland, had its first screening in Britain at a private display in Edinburgh. The audience comprised Scottish members of the Group.

* * *

G.B. Equipments, Ltd., have installed talkie apparatus in two of the League of Nation's conference halls. Their contract called for apparatus of the portable type for both 35 mm. and 16 mm. films, in addition to complete full-sized permanent plant.

* * *

A series of three travel films, *We Three in Argyll*, *Honeymoon Cruises*, and *The Road Through the Isles*, is being made by Mr. J. C. Elder and his wife, of Elder-Dalrymple Productions, for Messrs. MacBraynes of Glasgow, the West Highland Steamship Company. Mr. and Mrs. Elder are shooting in the highlands.

## *Cadbury's Film Library*

35 MM. SOUND ON FILM

*The Night Watchman's Story*, 6,500 ft. (73 mins.). A film about the cocoa and chocolate industry showing how cocoa beans are grown and harvested on the Gold Coast and how they are used in making cocoa and chocolate at Bournville.

*Country Fare*, 1,700 ft. (19 mins.). A documentary film on some aspects of agriculture, such as the production of eggs, milk and barley to meet the growing demand for foods of this kind.

*Work-a-day*, 3,000 ft. (34 mins.). This film describes the workings of a modern food factory and shows the provisions made at Bournville for the recreation of employees.

*Fascinating Facts*, 750 ft. (8 mins.). A "believe-it-or-not" film, presenting some of the surprising facts and statistics about the Factory in a Garden.

*The Gold Coast*, 1,800 ft. (80 mins.). A film about native life and industries on the Gold Coast of British West Africa.

16 MM. SOUND ON FILM

*The Night Watchman's Story*, 4 reels (45 mins.). A shortened version of the 35 mm. film described above.

*The Gold Coast*, 2 reels (20 mins.). See description above.

*Fascinating Facts*, 1 reel (8 mins.). See description above.

16 MM. SILENT

*The Night Watchman's Story*, 4 reels (45 mins.). Abridged edition.

**Country Fare*, 2 reels (20 mins.). Abridged edition.

**Work-a-day*. 2 reels (20 mins.). Abridged edition.

*Cocoa from the Gold Coast*. 1 reel (8 mins.). A teaching film.

**Agriculture*, 1 reel (8 mins.). A teaching film.

9.5 MM. SILENT

*A Day at Bournville*, 1 reel (15 mins.).

*The Cocoa Bean*, 1 reel (15 mins.).

**Country Fare*, 1 reel (15 mins.).

* In course of preparation.


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# TO-DAY WE LIVE

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"Brilliant documentary showing the life of the unemployed in the distressed areas. Imaginatively produced . . . this short should be appreciated by most audiences . . ." *Daily Film Renter*

"This little picture should find a place in the majority of our cinemas—it brings to the screen a section of British life that is all too dimly comprehended" *The Cinema*

"Documentary film of very real human interest" *The Era*

LAY PRESS

". . . a long step forward" *The Times*

". . . a poignant living picture" *The Star*

"This film makes history" *News Chronicle*

". . . one of the most remarkable documentary films yet made" *Daily Mirror*

" . . . should attract all British audiences" *Glasgow Herald*

"The best film I have seen during the past week" *Yorkshire Post*

"A brilliant short film" *Daily Herald*

*Photo by Contemporary Historian, New York.*

**LIFE wants dramatic pictures — Send yours to LIFE — 2-4 Dean Street, London, W.1**

# (People with Purposes—contd.)

## FILM IN EDUCATION

Devon County Council Education Committee recently adopted recommendations to purchase sound projectors and to make grants towards the purchase of equipment and the hiring of educational films by schools. Whilst the projectors would be primarily for classroom use, they might be lent at intervals to the County Agricultural Department for experimental purposes.

* * *

In Southampton schoolrooms are to be built with a definite view to using them for film shows, and comprehensive plans are being made by the Education Committee for the adoption of modern scientific aids to teaching.

* * *

In Barnsley eight schools are equipped with projectors; last year one school showed over a hundred educational films. The King Edward VII Grammar School in Colville recently purchased talkie apparatus, and the Bradford Education Committee has made a grant of £20 for a projector to the Gregory Girls' School. In Torquay a sound projector has been installed in every assembly hall, and a silent projector in every school in Audley Park.

* * *

Boys belonging to the Sherwood Congregational School in Nottingham have completed a four-reel silent film *My Friend Smith*, financed by The Religious Film Society.

* * *

17,000 schools in Germany are equipped with apparatus for showing educational films.

* * *

In Canada arrangements are being made to establish a film library for free circulation of educational pictures of the Empire among schools.

* * *

At a meeting of the Dundee Education Committee a letter was read from the Scottish Film Council, asking financial assistance towards the setting up of a Glasgow office, with a full-time manager, for the purpose of administering educational films in Scotland, giving advice on the formation of libraries of educational films, and assisting in the work of arranging vacation courses for teachers. At these classes teachers will be able to learn the technique of using a projector and keep in touch with latest developments.

The Committee's decision was deferred until they had an indication of how other cities were treating similar requests.

* * *

Followers of continental films will be interested to hear of an addition to cinemas showing these films in the West End: the Berkeley Cinema, in Lansdowne Row. It is small, but probably provides the most suited accommodation to the policy of the proprietors, which is to present new films produced in countries other than England and the United States. Under the direction of Count Ostrorog, it has made a successful beginning with *Der Herrscher*, German Prize Film of 1936 (see *Review of Reviews*), and hopes to keep up the standard with productions of Sacha Guitry, Willy Forst, Gustav Froelich, and other of the recognised continental directors.

# Teaching by Film and Radio— A League of Nations Effort

*The following report by Miss M. Locket is on the work of the Cinema Sub-Committee at the Conference of Committees of Intellectual Co-operation recently held in Paris.*

A "Month of Intellectual Co-operation" is now in progress in Paris under the ægis of the International Institute for Mutual Co-operation of the League of Nations. Of the various subject committees, the one round which centred popular interest was the advisory committee on League of Nations Teaching. This year its deliberations were concerned mainly with teaching by cinema and radio.

Suggestions had been invited from various national organisations and individuals and on these each sub-committee—one devoted to cinema and the other to radio—produced recommendations for the consideration of the Intellectual Co-operation Organisation.

As regards cinema, probably the most interesting of these recommendations is that designed to extend to further categories of films the exemptions from customs dues provided for in the League convention of 1933. These exemptions facilitate international circulation of films of educational character.

After considering how best to induce those Governments who have not yet signed or ratified the Convention to do so—"notably those more important States whose example is so necessary to encourage other adhesions," the committee outlined these proposed categories:

Films, so-called entertainment, but of high artistic and cultural standards.

Films faithfully representing the spirit of the country producing them and which consequently could contribute to a better knowledge of and reciprocal esteem between peoples.

Sections of newsreels of similar interest.

The next recommendation dealt with:

*National Activities:* Here the Sub-Committee suggests that though the role of the film is international, the Assembly should consider drawing the attention of Governments to certain measures calculated to develop national activities in such a way that the effect upon international activities could not but be favourable. It noted as of interest in this connection:

The role of national institutes and the important effect of Governments encouraging these activities where they already exist and wherever possible supplying additional funds for their support.

The creation of such institutes where they do not yet exist.

The important effects to be achieved from public bodies granting to such institutes all possible facilities for improving relations with similar national film institutes.

The importance of establishing closest relations between such institutes and national committees of Intellectual Co-operation.

Finally the sub-committee dealt with *International Activities*. It is suggested that the Intellectual Institute of Educational Cinematography at Rome, together with the International Institute of Intellectual Co-operation could undertake the following tasks:

To study the means of extending the categories of films benefiting from the International Convention.

To assist when necessary the creation of national film institutes, and to provide them with information, especially that based on experience gained elsewhere.

To assist relations between such institutes and to promote conferences of representatives.

To undertake a further study of the measures recommended by the Rome Congress of 1934 and to suggest a programme of action to give effect to this.

The suggestions received by the committee from various institutions and individuals, notably those of M. Jean Benoit-Lévy, the British Film Institute of London, A. de Cavalcanti, M. Van Staveren of Holland, etc. were considered with much interest.

## Swedish Films for Colleges

John Hay Whitney, President of the Museum of Modern Art Film Library, announces the arrival of a group of important motion picture films from Sweden, acquired through the courtesy of the Svensk Filmindustri. The most familiar to American audiences will probably be *Gösta Berling's Saga* (The story of Gösta Berling), in which Greta Garbo plays one of the principal roles. This film, directed in 1923-24 by Mauritz Stiller, stars Lars Hanson: Greta Garbo plays opposite him, and Gerda Lundequist-Dahlstrom is also featured. The film is eight reels long and has recently been synchronised with music. Students of the cinema will be interested to compare Garbo's appearance and acting in this her first important film with her later work in America.

When Mauritz Stiller, one of the greatest Swedish directors, was brought to America in 1925 to direct, he insisted that Garbo be put under contract by the same motion picture company. He recognised her potentialities and watched over her career. Before Stiller died in 1928 Garbo had attained the prominence he foresaw for her.

Victor Seastrom and Mauritz Stiller were the two greatest Swedish directors. It was largely their work which gave the Swedish film international prominence in the years immediately after the War and before the German films attracted attention. Seastrom came to America to direct films in 1923 and Stiller in 1925.

A series of programmes composed of the Swedish films brought over and of American films will be shown in New York next season by the Museum of Modern Art and will be circulated by the Film Library to museums, colleges and study groups throughout American and in Canada.

# LETTERS

## A letter to Robert Flaherty from Quatsino, British Columbia

We have a little Pulp town (Port Alice) of about 800 population alongside this Port. It has its little Church on the Hill, further down the hill is the Movie "Palace"—seats a bit hard. The former with its little congregation and good Padre every Sunday, the latter with its *large* "congregation" twice a week. The best films arriving about six months after release.

Being the oldest timer I have watched this grow up all around me and have the honour of the friendship of a few, and the acquaintance of many of the population. In regard to the reaction to the films it seems to me this little community represents a fair cross-section of the rest of humanity. The mental range runs from the College graduate to the Japanese Cooley. Two distinct races; a number of nationalities; Catholics; Christian Science; and besides the Anglican Church on the hill.

Our fellow human beings are always entertainment to me and the opportunity here to know many at close quarters and their reactions to the movie seems excellent. Generally speaking the only mission, or result of the movie, is its three hours entertainment, something directly opposite from the daily grind of work; what the "show" was week before last and its effects are entirely forgotten. The audience still keeps up but I notice a steady demand for something more.

The wonderful advance in the mechanical art of movie science; a new twist to romance now and again; informative newsreels, and these are all now quite expected and if the Feature is not top notch you hear an increase of adverse comments next day.

For each picture there is a sameness more or less in the comments—"Acting fairly good"; "Not much"; "So and so done the part very . . ."; etc. Once in a very great while we get a picture with what I call a "Kick." A special adventure like your wonderful *Man of Aran* or more particularly *Green Pastures*. Over this latter there was considerable controversy, a new set of ideas was touched this time.

To my mind some sort of a "kick" will always be necessary in the future to keep the wonderful drama in its leading rôle. When I tell the good Padre one of the functions of the mighty movie of the future will be to help him out, he thinks I'm getting a bit radical.

B. W. LEESON

## And Robert Flaherty's reply

*Dear Mr. Leeson,*

*I read with great interest your description of audiences and their attitude towards films. The constructive interest which you show is one of the hopes for the future of the motion picture.*

*There is published now in England a magazine which I believe is the first good motion picture magazine to be published anywhere in the world. I am asking them to send it to you with my compliments.—Yours sincerely,*

*ROBERT FLAHERTY*

## Judicial Murder basis for film

A film which is based on a definite social incident, almost contemporary, is still sufficiently uncommon to be worth emphasising. From this point of view *Winterset*, the film taken from a play by Maxwell Anderson, has hardly had the attention it deserves, referring as it does to one of the foulest judicial crimes in living memory.

On April 15th, 1920, in the small town of South Braintree, Massachusetts, two men carrying the weekly pay-roll to the shoe factory of Messrs. Slater and Morrill were shot dead by bandits in broad daylight and the money stolen. On May 5th, 1920, two Italians, Nicola Sacco, shoemaker, and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, fish-pedlar, were arrested, and in July, 1921, they were convicted of the crime. They were executed in August, 1927.

There was no direct evidence against them. After their conviction fresh evidence came to light which not only cleared them of the crime, but pointed clearly to the actual murderers, but their every application for a fresh trial was refused by the Judge who tried them. The Judge's name was Webster Thayer. But they were radicals, anarchists, pacifists, arrested at a time of tremendous anti-radical feeling in the U.S.A. Ignorant of the crime for which they were arrested, fearful that it was because of their radical activities, knowing that one of their anarchist friends had just fallen to his death in some unknown manner from the fourteenth floor window of Police Headquarters, they lied to the Police, tried to conceal their recent movements. This "consciousness of guilt" seems to have been the main evidence upon which the conviction of murder was based.

Many of these points are duly brought out in *Winterset*. Quite naturally the film makes no direct mention of Sacco or Vanzetti; the circumstances of the murder and trial are varied; only one man is convicted of the crime; and the film is mainly concerned to trace a subsequent hypothetical meeting between the son of the executed man, the Judge, driven crazy by conscience, the actual murderer, and the Portuguese boy whose evidence, never admitted at the trial, would have cleared the innocent men.

But there is enough resemblance in the film to make the reference crystal clear. The date of the murder, 1920; the manner in which it was committed; the radical papers left in the car; the name of the accused man, BARTOLOMEO Romagna. But it is with the words of Romagna at his trial that all doubt ends. "In all my life I never stole and I never killed. I am an innocent man," says Romagna. "Not only am I innocent of these two crimes," said Vanzetti (he had been convicted of another robbery), "not only in all my life I have never stolen, never killed, never spilled blood, but I have struggled all my life, since I began to reason, to eliminate crime from the earth . . . even the crimes that the Law and the Church legitimate and sanctify." And Judge Gaunt preludes his sentencing of Romagna with almost the identical words of Judge Thayer. "There is only one thing left for this Court to do. It is not a matter of discretion, it is a matter of the Law. And that is to pronounce sentence."

Congratulations then to Radio for producing a picture which sincerely and conscientiously does honour to the memory of two men who were not only innocent of crime, but whose letters and speeches mark them out as men of outstanding principle and high courage. Only the Judge is too leniently treated. He is given a conscience. But a man who refused all applications for a new trial during seven years, who is reported to have told his golfing acquaintances that he was "going to get those anarchistic bastards," is not entitled to credit for so much.

STANLEY HAWES

## Operators' hours and pay

It is interesting to note that Mr. Ernest Brown, the Minister of Labour, is to institute enquiries into the hours of work and conditions of labour connected with cinema attendants and cinematograph operators.

I would state on oath that I, at one time, had to work as many as 87 hours per week in a West End Super. These hours were made up as follows: Monday to Saturday, 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. (more often to 11.30 p.m.), Sunday (including afternoon stage rehearsals) 2 p.m. to 11 p.m., total 87 hours. In addition to this, it was not uncommon to work until 3 or 4 a.m. on a night trade show on two days during the week.

"Work Sundays, too?" I hear you say. Yes, this had to be done when acting as relief for men on holiday or sickness, and this was always done to cover the four operators engaged during the eight holiday weeks each year (two weeks each).

Did we grumble? No, we were well looked after and well paid, I for instance earning from £15 to £20 a week, but in time, the strain became too great and I resigned, I was "drunk" tired and was ready to sleep anywhere.

But this very day there is a cinema in the L.C.C. area which pays its chief operator £3 a week, the assistant a lad of 17, £1 a week with a very young boy to help, for a few shillings. When the Chief has his day off, the £1 a week worker, is on constant duty for nine hours, having his food on the machine, leaving the young boy in charge when he has to leave the box occasionally for other duties.

All this, despite the stringent Home Office and L.C.C. regulations, and you can take it from me, that the Minister of Labour will have his work cut out to get down to the basic facts.

A PROJECTIONIST

The following may be of interest to your readers.

According to Katherine Roberts in the June issue of "Stage" a playwright's royalties in the American theatre for the last three and a half years exclusively from stage productions and sales of the same plays to pictures (without any visit to Hollywood or further work on these plays) amounted to $527,416.08.

The playwright was Shakespeare.

JACK BEDDINGTON

# RADIO AND TELEVISION

## Television
### by George Audit

IN a recent issue of WORLD FILM NEWS I complained that the figures on the television screen were much too small. If you want to follow the movements of your favourite ballerina it is exasperating to have to peer at a figure only four inches high which appears to be about thirty feet away. Actually the television camera may only be about ten feet from the subject but the image—when seen on a screen no bigger than a sheet of quarto paper—looks much more remote. In the theatre you may use glasses to get a better view of the actor but with television you are helpless to approach the subject.

The television close-up was first used with Gracie Fields' appearance a few weeks ago and was an immediate success. The subject may now be approached until her face more than fills the screen. The focusing is perfect so that the close-up makes a better picture merely from a photographic point of view. The odd and beautiful effects of light and shade obtainable in a television picture—so different from film equivalents—are not lost with the close-up, in fact they make it the more interesting.

The tiny size of the screen is a handicap. Projection, if only to twice the present size, would make all the difference. No doubt projection will have its problems and we shall be wondering whether to retire to bed and project the picture on to the ceiling for want of wallspace, and so on. But some enlargement of the present Lilliputian scale is absolutely essential.

* * * *

The volume of production at Alexandra Palace is obviously too great for present staff and equipment. You can see the makeshift in every programme. A single backcloth or no scenery at all. A wooden camera that does not follow its subjects unobtrusively but makes them approach it. Under-rehearsed or impromptu introductions and dialogue. A ridiculous slide of Alexandra Palace on a foggy morning for an interval sign. These criticisms are not necessarily any reflection on the present television staff who are making the best of a bad job. The fact is that the pressure of one programme on the heels of the next cuts out any possibility of thorough productions. Television simply has not got the money it needs.

Television now receives about £200,000 a year from the B.B.C. To develop it properly for the South of England alone would cost £1,000,000 a year. That sum would take all the B.B.C.'s programme appropriation, and is therefore out of the question. It can expect no aid from the Radio Manufacturers' Association who are not yet in a position to make a television receiver cheap enough to ensure mass sales. It would, therefore, seem that circumstances will compel television to remain in an experimental stage until the Treasury opens its pocket to the tune of a million or more a year or a new licensing system is initiated (the more likely of the two) and the manufacturers can put a set on the market for something under £20.

It is interesting to notice that the United States is finding it even more difficult to develop television within the limits of the sponsored programme system. Apart from the enormous initial expense of installing new equipment in the stations and laying out an entirely new network of wires, television is a more costly medium than radio in the programme stage itself.

For television, scripts must be memorised, positions and movements of the actors must be carefully rehearsed, and settings provided. All this costs a lot of money and the rich American patron is not prepared to foot the bill until he is assured of a bigger audience than is yet possible.

* * * *

The relays from Wimbledon were something quite new in quality of reproduction and in the placing of the shots. The trouble with so many film versions of the tennis tournaments has been that the camera has tried to keep pace with the ball, and in switching from one player to another has ended in a confusion of strokes and dashes with the ball invisible. The television version had one camera commanding the whole playing area of the court and another to interject close-ups of the scoreboard, one of the players or an occupant of the Royal Box. The general view of the court was so clear that you could see the tiny white ball flash from one side to the other quite distinctly. Unfortunately the figures on this scale were so small that one had to approach to within a foot or two of the screen to see them distinctly. But at this proximity the image was so distinct that you could follow every detail of the strokes. I have seen the Centre Court play in the newsreels and through television, and I can say that the latter was by far the closest approximation to the real scene, and incidentally more enjoyable.

Technically the Wimbledon relay was most important because it was the first recording of the mobile television unit. This unit consists of a scanning apparatus with an Emitron camera and a radio transmitter. The scene is scanned and broadcast on ultra-short waves over the twelve miles to Alexandra Palace. The experiment was a complete success and it now only remains to be seen whether the unit is able to range further afield.

* * * *

It is encouraging to notice that the B.B.C.'s Television Department is displaying the same vitality and critical powers that were once the characteristics of its parent organisation. It is obvious from the recent behaviour of the television camera that its directors are thinking about the scope and limitations of their medium. They have dropped panning altogether. Bad panning in some of the early programmes produced the funniest effects, especially in a game like table tennis, where the unfortunate viewer often felt like the man in the Shell advertisements. Sound commentary is still a difficulty. This was particularly noticeable in the Wimbledon relays. In radio commentaries the speech is always a few seconds behind the action of the game, but that does not worry the listener at all.

Such commentary is obviously useless when the listener watching the scene at the same time as the observer. The B.B.C. tried the old method with laughable results. At Wimbledon the observer often attempted to anticipate the actions of the players in what he said—again with amusing results. It seems that television will have to abandon any attempt to run a continuous commentary on every stroke of a game, and develop its sound more on the lines of critical comments on the actions that have gone before, much as an experienced observer in the stand might be remarking to his companion in the next seat on the progress of the game. The reactions of the crowd will also have more value as broadcast material when the cause of their comments is being seen.

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## *Radio is Changing Us*—
### by David Cleghorn Thomson
### (Watts, 2/6)

Those who read Cleghorn Thomson's sketch of Sir John Reith in the last issue of *W.F.N.* will have caught something of the informed and penetrative qualities of his book. Behind him he has eight years' experience as a B.B.C. official. His directorship of the Scottish Regional was marked by a boldness of programme policy and a tenacious struggle for regional autonomy which enlisted no small measure of support both in his own district and outside. His resignation was one of the more unfortunate examples of the B.B.C.'s failure to understand and exploit creative capacity.

Mr. Thomson views broadcasting achievement from the standpoint of the professional; his chief interests lie in the internal shaping of policies and programmes. On the basic issues of the formation of taste, propaganda, monopoly, sponsorship, and relation to government he blesses the B.B.C. and finds it good. On the programme side he finds imagination, creative ability and, with the possible exception of the Talks Department, a progressive grasp of the opportunities of the medium. It is to the administration that he traces the root troubles which make the B.B.C. a "not yet happy ship" carrying "the heaviest crew of isolated intellectuals of any vessel in British waters." The charges against B.B.C. authority on this score are common knowledge. Initiative has been stifled, constructive criticism repressed, creative effort hedged about with regulations and red tape.

As a critic of the B.B.C., free from the restraints of immediate loyalty yet deeply concerned for broadcasting, Mr. Thomson is first-rate. But at the end of the book, though radio is seen to have changed the B.B.C.—and, incidentally, Mr. Thomson—it has not changed *us*. In 1933 Hilda Matheson published a short but admirable survey of broadcasting in which she foreshadowed the principal directions in which radio might affect society. She brought up a host of speculative questions concerning the probable action of radio on politics, citizenship, education, art and war. Mr. Thomson writes from the microphone, not from the loud-speaker. With the wisdom of caution he bases his interpretations on present trends and past achievements. But a measure of speculation from the listener's end would not have been out of place from one so well equipped.

S.L.

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# COSTUME DRAMA—BUT NOT TOO MUCH!

## by Sinclair Hill

SINCE 1933, according to a list in the March issue of WORLD FILM NEWS, some nineteen historical-biographical films have been produced in British studios.

The list does not include the numerous straight costume subjects (*i.e.* the non-historical, non-biographical works) that have also been made during that time.

If it did, the combined total of costume films would probably reach a pretty high figure. Which means that there has been a decided tendency on the part of costume and period film to dominate the British moving picture industry.

Has the British film industry benefited by this spate of costume and history? Or has the cycle been overdone?

Before answering these questions let us consider for a moment the outstanding British films that have been shown during the past few years—outstanding, that is, from the point of view of comparison with the ordinary product.

Almost at once we think of *Don Quixote*, *Henry VIII*, *Catherine the Great*, *Jew Suss*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Nell Gwynn*, *Peg of Old Drury*, *Don Juan*.

We think of *Tudor Rose*, *Rembrandt*, *Fire Over England*, *The Wandering Jew*, *Mimi*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *I Give My Heart*, etc.

I myself have been responsible for *The Cardinal* and *My Old Dutch* and there are other subjects far too numerous to mention.

But the above list is surely enough to show the extent of the costume trend.

Now most of these pictures, with the possible exception of *My Old Dutch*, are thorough out-and-out costume spectacles. Moreover they comprise the highlights of British production—the films on which, perhaps, we most pride ourselves.

To complete the data and add point to our arguments, we must not overlook the many American efforts in this line, from *Disraeli*, *The Barretts*, *Queen Christina*, *The House of Rothschild* and *Mutiny on the Bounty*, etc., right down to the more recent *White Angel*, *Anthony Adverse*, *Charge of the Light Brigade*, *Mary of Scotland*, *San Francisco* and *Camille*.

Now I think it will be found that whereas these American costume films are incidents in the general trend of Hollywood production, in British production the names mentioned, and the dozens not mentioned, tend to be somewhat dominant and overshadowing.

Why should this be?

A period film is necessarily expensive, with its lavish dresses and splendid settings (all of which have to be built in the studio), and however magnificent there is always the risk that they may appear a little superficial.

And yet, how does this spectacle and pomp compare with American-made pictures of modern life in simple settings—pictures well, but not ostentatiously dressed, such as *The Thin Man*, *Mr. Deeds*, *Three Smart Girls*, *Craig's Wife*, and all the others which come to us from Hollywood.

Do English producers dismiss the idea of making modern-life stories for home and overseas consumption because they cannot compete with the Americans on this ground? Do they consider costume parades better propositions?

I would like to make it clear that personally I am not in the least bit prejudiced against costume production, nor do I wish to take a narrow view of the situation. I believe that British producers are better qualified to deal with history and costume because of our deeper understanding and appreciation of tradition and the past, I believe the colour and glamour of the past, the amazing wealth of incident that can be culled from the pages of history, can make excellent entertainment.

Indeed, at this moment I myself am considering for production in the near future a costume subject which for many years I have been longing to film.

But—and this is the point of my argument—I maintain that costume must be used carefully and sparingly, and as an occasional ingredient in the entertainment cocktail.

As a whole aim and trend of production it may become an obsession and a bad master.

If America can make pictures like *The Informer*, *Exclusive Story* and *The Murder Man*, from simple, dramatic material, relying upon the story and idea behind the picture why cannot we in England do the same?

The answer is that we can do it if we try; and what is more we are beginning to do it.

To appreciate the truth of this you have only to consider recent productions like *Hail and Farewell*, *Sensation*, and *Jump for Glory*, and forthcoming pictures like *Four Dark Hours* and *A Shilling for Candles*.

I myself have just made a film about armaments called *Midnight Menace*, certainly a topical subject in view of the political situation to-day.

Yes, if we British producers would concentrate more on making dramas and comedies of life, with modern simplicity of atmosphere or topical significance, instead of casting too much of our lot with the past, I think we would not only benefit ourselves, but would undoubtedly be rendering cinema-goers at home, in the British Dominions and elsewhere, a real service.

"Don Quixote"

# FILM GUIDE

## *Shorts*

**Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves** (Puppets in Gaspar-colour).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Slatinay and George Pal
ANDOVER: Odeon — Aug. 9, 3 days
BARMOUTH: White Cinema — Aug. 19, 3 days
BRADFORD: Lyceum — Aug. 19, 3 days
DINGWALL: Picture House — Aug. 12, 3 days
DUNFERMLINE: Palace — Aug. 19, 3 days
ILFRACOMBE: New Cinema — Aug. 9, 6 days
KETTERING: Central — Aug. 2, 3 days
KIRKCALDY: Carlton — Aug. 30, 3 days
LEAMINGTON: Prince of Wales — Aug. 5, 3 days
SELBY: Central — Aug. 16, 2 days

**And So to Work** (Comedy of the early morning).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Richard Massingham
BIRMINGHAM: Northfield Picture House — Aug. 19, 3 days
LEEDS: Tatler — Aug. 30, 6 days
LIVERPOOL: Smithdown Picture Playhouse — Aug. 19, 3 days

**Beside the Seaside** (Documentary of South Coast resorts).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson
NOTTINGHAM: News House — Aug. 5, 3 days
STOCKPORT: Cinema, Poynton — Aug. 2, 3 days

**Birthplace of America** (British origins of American pioneers).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* A. Moncrieff Davidson
BRADFORD: Tennyson — Aug. 12, 3 days
CLITHEROE: Grand — Aug. 2, 3 days
HOLYWOOD: Maypole — Aug. 26, 3 days
HOYLAKE: Winter Gardens — Aug. 16, 3 days
HYDE: Theatre Royal — Aug. 26, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Warwick — Aug. 23, 3 days
MARPLE: Regent — Aug. 23, 2 days
OAKENGATES: Grosvenor — Aug. 19, 3 days
ORMSKIRK: Pavilion — Aug. 19, 3 days
PRESTWICH: Astoria — Aug. 5, 3 days
QUEENSFERRY: Plaza — Aug. 2, 3 days
RIPON: Palladium — Aug. 26, 3 days
ST. AUSTELL: Savoy — Aug. 9, 3 days
SHEFFIELD: Park — Aug. 19, 3 days
WOODHOUSE: Picture Palace — Aug. 12, 3 days

**Cover to Cover** (Documentary of book production).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Alexander Shaw
BARMOUTH: White Cinema — Aug. 19, 3 days
BOOTLE: Imperial — Aug. 16, 3 days
BRADFORD: Grange — Aug. 16, 3 days
CASTLETON: Princes — Aug. 13, 2 days
CHESTER-LE-STREET: Empire — Aug. 15, 1 day
CROYDON: Classic — Aug. 12, 3 days
DURHAM: Regal — Aug. 30, 3 days
GOLDTHORPE: Picture House — Aug. 23, 6 days
HOLMFIRTH: Valley — Aug. 19, 3 days
LOWESTOFT: Playhouse — Aug. 2, 24 days
NEWFIELD: Grand — Aug. 19, 3 days
NEWQUAY: Pavilion — Aug. 2, 3 days
RIPON: Opera House — Aug. 5, 3 days
ST. HELENS: Scala — Aug. 9, 6 days
TOOTING: Classic — Aug. 5, 3 days
WALTON: Capitol — Aug. 2, 3 days
WEST HARTLEPOOL: Regal — Aug. 23, 6 days

**Enough to Eat?** (Investigation into mal-nutrition).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Gas, Light and Coke Co.
*DIRECTION:* Edgar Anstey
ABERDEEN: Topical News — Aug. 16, 6 days
EDINBURGH: Monseigneur — Aug. 9, 3 days
LONDON: Monseigneur, Leicester Square — Aug. 9, 3 days
Monseigneur, Piccadilly — Aug. 9, 3 days
Sphere, Tottenham Court Road — Aug. 12, 3 days
Strand, Agar Street — Aug. 12, 3 days
NOTTINGHAM: News House — Aug. 19, 3 days
SOUTHEND: Kursaal — Aug. 19, 3 days

**Forbidden Frontier** (Political situation between Poland and Lithuania).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* World Window Productions
*SUPERVISION:* Sir Philip Gibbs
EGREMONT: Gaumont Palace — Aug. 9, 6 days
GLOSSOP: Empire — Aug. 23, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Corona — Aug. 19, 3 days
Gaumont, Princes Park — Aug. 19, 3 days
NORTH SHIELDS: Princes — Aug. 23, 6 days
NORTHWICH: Plaza — Aug. 23, 6 days
SOUTHAMPTON: Cinenews — Aug. 22, 4 days
SOUTHPORT: Palladium — Aug. 30, 6 days
WEYMOUTH: Belle Vue — Aug. 19, 3 days

**Gentlemen in Top Hats and Gentlemen in Crowns** (Historical survey of European events for the past 40 years).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* A.B. Svensk Filmindustri
*ENGLISH VERSION:* Donald Taylor
IPSWICH: Picture House — Aug. 2, 6 days

**Happy Hampstead** (All about Hampstead).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* R. B. Pearce
ASTON: Astoria — Aug. 12, 3 days
BRIGHTON: Duke of York's — Aug. 2, 3 days
FARNDON: Palace — Aug. 19, 3 days
HARROW: Carlton — Aug. 9, 3 days
ILFORD: Coliseum — Aug. 16, 6 days
LEEDS: Tatler — Aug. 16, 6 days
Picture House, Headingley — Aug. 26, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Carlton — Aug. 2, 3 days
NORWOOD: Astoria — Aug. 1, 4 days
NORTHFLEET: Strathena — Aug. 9, 3 days
TOOTING: Vogue — Aug. 5, 3 days

**Heads and Tails** (Film of greyhound racing).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
ELTHAM: Palace — Aug. 16, 6 days
GRAVESEND: Super — Aug. 22, 7 days

**Hollywood To-day** (Behind the scenes in Film City).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Rupert Grayson
BLOXWICH: Odeon — Aug. 19, 3 days
CHESTERFIELD: Picture House — Aug. 16, 6 days
CHICHESTER: Plaza — Aug. 19, 3 days
CROYDON: Classic — Aug. 8, 4 days
DUNDEE: Empire — Aug. 12, 3 days
Vogue — Aug. 12, 3 days
GRAVESEND: Regal — Aug. 29, 7 days
HULL: Savoy — Aug. 5, 3 days
KINGS LYNN: Majestic — Aug. 19, 3 days
LANCING: Regal — Aug. 19, 3 days
LEEDS: Tatler — Aug. 16, 6 days
MAIDSTONE: Palace — Aug. 1, 7 days
MANCHESTER: Tatler — Aug. 30, 6 days
SALISBURY: Picture House — Aug. 5, 3 days
SHEFFIELD: Hillsborough Park — Aug. 23, 3 days
Lansdowne — Aug. 12, 3 days
Sunbeam — Aug. 12, 3 days
Weston — Aug. 19, 3 days
STAFFORD: Odeon — Aug. 23, 6 days
STOURBRIDGE: Central — Aug. 26, 3 days
YORK: Odeon — Aug. 2, 6 days

**How to be a Detective** (In the Benchley manner).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION and DIRECTION:* Robert Benchley
MANCHESTER: Tatler — Aug. 30, 6 days

**How to Train a Dog** (Typical Benchley).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION and DIRECTION:* Robert Benchley
MANCHESTER: Tatler — Aug. 9, 6 days

**Islands of the Bounty** (Islands associated with the famous mutiny).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
BARTON-ON-HUMBER: Oxford — Aug. 9, 3 days
CHILTON: Regal — Aug. 5, 3 days
CONGLETON: Pemier — Aug. 4, 4 days
GAINSBOROUGH: Grand — Aug. 16, 3 days
HILLSBOROUGH: Kinema — Aug. 5, 3 days
LEMINGTON: Prince of Wales — Aug. 5, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Royal — Aug. 19, 3 days
MEXBOROUGH: Empire — Aug. 2, 6 days
PLAISTOW: Greengates — Aug. 9, 3 days
SOUTHAMPTON: Cinenews — Aug. 1, 4 days

**Joie de Vivre** (Cartoon).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*PRODUCTION:* Gross and Hoppin
CHELMSFORD: Ritz — Aug. 30, 6 days
LONDON: News Theatre, Victoria — Aug. 23, 3 days
News Theatre, Waterloo — Aug. 26, 3 days
NORWICH: Carlton — Aug. 2, 5 days

**Key to Scotland** (Documentary of Edinburgh).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson
LIVERPOOL: Smithdown Picture Playhouse — Aug. 23, 3 days
LONDON: King's Palace, Wimbledon — Aug. 23, 6 days
Sphere, Tottenham Court Road — Aug. 12, 3 days
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: Adelaide, Benwell — Aug. 23, 3 days

**Milestones** (The varying types to be seen in England).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* A. Moncrieff Davidson
DARLASTON: Picturedrome — Aug. 26, 3 days
DARNALL: Lyric — Aug. 26, 3 days
GOLBORNE: Royal Pavilion — Aug. 19, 3 days
GREAT HOXTON: Grange — Aug. 5, 3 days
HALIFAX: Alhambra — Aug. 23, 3 days
HORWICH: Picture House — Aug. 30, 3 days
NEWCASTLE (Co. Down, Ireland): Picture Palace — Aug. 11, 2 days
ORMSKIRK: Pavilion — Aug. 26, 3 days
RIPON: Palladium — Aug. 19, 3 days
SALFORD: Rex — Aug. 9, 3 days
SKIPTON: Plaza — Aug. 2, 3 days
STRETFORD: Corona — Aug. 23, 3 days

**Night Mail** (Documentary of the northward trip of the postal special).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Basil Wright and Harry Watt
ALCESTER: Regent — Aug. 23, 3 days
CARNFORTH: Kinema — Aug. 27, 2 days
DUNFERMLINE: Palace — Aug. 19, 3 days
INGLETON: Cinema — Aug. 2, 2 days
LEEDS: Haddon Hall — Aug. 23, 3 days
MIDDLETON: Palace — Aug. 2, 6 days
PLAISTOW: Greengates — Aug. 9, 3 days
STAVELEY: Empire — Aug. 5, 3 days
TENBY: Pavilion — Aug. 5, 3 days
TOOTING: Classic — Aug. 22, 4 days

**Nomad in the North** (Scenic film of Norway).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION and DIRECTION:* C. E. Hodges
BIRKENHEAD: Super — Aug. 23, 6 days
EGREMONT: Gaumont Palace — Aug. 23, 6 days
CINDERFORD: Palace — Aug. 30, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Casino — Aug. 5, 3 days
Empress — Aug. 23, 6 days
Gaumont Palace — Aug. 26, 3 days
Plaza — Aug. 2, 3 days
Tatler — Aug. 23, 3 days
NEW BRIGHTON: Trocadero — Aug. 26, 3 days
NORTH SHIELDS: Princes — Aug. 30, 6 days
SOUTHAMPTON: Cinenews — Aug. 26, 3 days
SOUTHPORT: Palladium — Aug. 12, 7 days
WESTON SUPER MARE: Regent — Aug. 30, 6 days

**Out to Play** (London's children in street and park).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* Harold Lowenstein
HARROW: Carlton — Aug. 30, 3 days
LEYTON: Kings — Aug. 23, 6 days
LONDON: Cameo, Charing Cross Road — Aug. 30, 3 days
Tatler, Charing Cross Road — Aug. 23, 7 days

**Overland Express** (German travelogue).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* C. E. Hodges Productions
ABERDEEN: Topical News — Aug. 2, 6 days
CIRENCESTER: Picture House — Aug. 16, 3 days
EDINBURGH: Monseigneur — Aug. 16, 3 days
GLASGOW: Westway, Cardonald — Aug. 5, 3 days
LONDON: Sphere, Tottenham Court Road — Aug. 23 ,3 days
Strand, Agar Street — Aug. 23, 3 days
NOTTINGHAM: News House — Aug. 26, 3 days
SOUTHEND: Kursaal — Aug. 9, 3 days
WORTHING: Rivoli — Aug. 2, 6 days

# Shorts (contd.)

**Plane Sailing** (The ins and outs of gliding).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Bosworth Goldman

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|---|---|
| BATH: News Theatre | Aug. 30, 3 days |
| DORCHESTER: Palace | Aug. 19, 3 days |
| EDINBURGH: Monseigneur | Aug. 26, 3 days |
| GAINSBOROUGH: Grand | Aug. 2, 3 days |
| GRANTHAM: Picture House | Aug. 5, 3 days |
| GUERNSEY: Lyric | Aug. 26, 3 days |
| KINGS LYNN: Majestic | Aug. 2, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Gaumont Palace | Aug. 12, 3 days |
| Tatler | Aug. 26, 3 days |
| LONDON: Monseigneur, Charing Cross | Aug. 23, 3 days |
| Monseigneur, Leicester Square | Aug. 12, 3 days |
| Sphere, Tottenham Court Road | Aug. 19, 3 days |
| Strand, Agar Street | Aug. 9, 3 days |
| LUTON: Empire | Aug. 12, 3 days |
| MANCHESTER: Tatler | Aug. 30, 6 days |
| NORTHAMPTON: Exchange | Aug. 2, 6 days |
| SOUTHAMPTON: Cinenews | Aug. 26, 3 days |
| SOUTHPORT: Palladium | Aug. 9, 6 days |
| WAKEFIELD: Carlton | Aug. 12, 3 days |
| WEYMOUTH: Regent | Aug. 9, 6 days |

**Rooftops of London** (Documentary).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Paul Rotha

| | |
|---|---|
| MANCHESTER: Tatler | Aug. 16, 6 days |

**Scratch Meal** (Marcel Boulestin demonstrates cooking).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*DIRECTION:* Arthur Elton

| | |
|---|---|
| MANCHESTER: Tatler | Aug. 2, 6 days |

**Secret Hiding Places** (Priest holes to be found in English country houses).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Granville Squiers

| | |
|---|---|
| EDINBURGH: Monseigneur | Aug. 2, 3 days |
| LANCING: Regal | Aug. 5, 3 days |
| LONDON: Monseigneur, Piccadilly | Aug. 19, 3 days |
| Monseigneur, Strand | Aug. 16, 3 days |
| WINDSOR: Regal | Aug. 2, 3 days |

**Snow Water** (Water power in the Swiss mountains).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* H. Dreyer

| | |
|---|---|
| BATH: News Theatre | Aug. 16, 3 days |
| BRIDGWATER: Palace | Aug. 12, 3 days |
| CIRENCESTER: Picture House | Aug. 19, 3 days |
| CORBY: Odeon | Aug. 5, 3 days |
| DORCHESTER: Palace | Aug. 9, 3 days |
| EDINBURGH: Monseigneur | Aug. 30, 3 days |
| GUERNSEY: Lyric | Aug. 2, 6 days |
| HARROGATE: Odeon | Aug. 30, 6 days |
| HEREFORD: Odeon | Aug. 22, 4 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Bedford | Aug. 5, 3 days |
| Magnet | Aug. 26, 3 days |
| Tatler | Aug. 19, 3 days |
| LONDON: Monseigneur, Leicester Square | Aug. 26, 3 days |
| Monseigneur, Charing Cross | Aug. 19, 3 days |
| Sphere, Tottenham Court Road | Aug. 26, 3 days |
| Strand, Agar Street | Aug. 12, 3 days |
| NEW BRIGHTON: Trocadero | Aug. 2, 3 days |
| NORTHAMPTON: Exchange | Aug. 9, 6 days |
| SOUTHAMPTON: Cinenews | Aug. 5, 3 days |
| STOURBRIDGE: Central | Aug. 2, 3 days |
| YORK: Odeon | Aug. 30, 6 days |

**Song of Ceylon** (Documentary of Ceylon).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
*DIRECTION:* Basil Wright

| | |
|---|---|
| FARNDON: Palace | Aug. 12, 3 days |
| WESTCLIFF-ON-SEA: Mascot | Aug. 2, 6 days |

**Spring Comes to Town** (About Hyde Park).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* M. L. Nathan

| | |
|---|---|
| BATH: News Theatre | Aug. 9, 3 days |
| HARROW: Carlton | Aug. 16, 3 days |
| LEYTON: Kings | Aug. 16, 6 days |
| LONDON: Tatler | Aug. 9, 7 days |

**Strange Adventure** (About Africa).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning

| | |
|---|---|
| AYLESBURY: Market | Aug. 30, 3 days |
| BARNSLEY: Ritz | Aug. 2, 6 days |
| BECKENHAM: Regal | Aug. 9, 6 days |
| BOLTON: Regal | Aug. 9, 3 days |
| BRIDGWATER: Palace | Aug. 19, 3 days |
| DARLINGTON: Alhambra | Aug. 2, 3 days |
| ERITH: Picture House | Aug. 9, 3 days |
| GUILDFORD: Plaza | Aug. 19, 3 days |
| HIGH WYCOMBE: Majestic | Aug. 23, 3 days |
| ILFORD: Coliseum | Aug. 30, 3 days |
| LEYTON: Kings | Aug. 30, 6 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Bedford | Aug. 19, 3 days |
| Casino | Aug. 19, 3 days |
| Gaumont | Aug. 5, 3 days |
| Plaza | Aug. 19, 3 days |
| LONDON: Cinema, Woolwich | Aug. 16, 6 days |
| Hippodrome, Greenwich | Aug. 16, 6 days |
| Regal, Wimbledon | Aug. 9, 6 days |
| Walpole, Ealing | Aug. 30, 6 days |
| NEW BRIGHTON: Trocadero | Aug. 16, 3 days |
| NORWICH: Carlton | Aug. 30, 6 days |
| SOUTHERN: Ritz | Aug. 1, 7 days |
| TUNBRIDGE WELLS: Ritz | Aug. 30, 6 days |
| UXBRIDGE: Savoy | Aug. 30, 6 days |
| WEYBRIDGE: County | Aug. 23, 3 days |
| WEYMOUTH: Belle Vue | Aug. 2, 3 days |
| WINCHESTER: Royal | Aug. 19, 3 days |

**They Shall Not Pass** (Documentary of the Civil War in Spain; English commentary).
*DISTRIBUTION:* International Sound Films
*PRODUCTION:* Ministry of Public Instruction in Madrid

| | |
|---|---|
| ABERDEEN: News Theatre | Aug. 2, 6 days |
| PAISLEY: West End | Aug. 16, 6 days |
| Alexandra | Aug. 19, 3 days |
| GLASGOW: Orient | Aug. 23, 6 days |

**Under the Water** (Unusual submarine photography).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* Marcel de Hubsch

| | |
|---|---|
| CLEVELEYS: Pavilion | Aug. 8, 4 days |
| FARNDON: Palace | Aug. 19, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Carlton | Aug. 26, 3 days |
| MAIDSTONE: Palace | Aug. 15, 7 days |
| SNODLAND: Queens | Aug. 16, 3 days |
| WREXHAM: Majestic | Aug. 5, 3 days |
| YORK: Clifton | Aug. 2, 7 days |

# Foreign Films

**Yiddle with His Fiddle** (Polish comedy, with English sub-titles).
*DIRECTION:* Joseph Green
*STARRING:* Molly Picon

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Academy | Aug. 1, indefinitely |

**Virtuous Isidore** (French).
*DISTRIBUTION:* International Film Distributors
*DIRECTION:* Bernard Deschamps
*STARRING:* Françoise Rosay
Fernandal

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Forum | Aug. 8, 7 days |

**Mad Girl** (French).
*DIRECTION:* Leo Joannon
*STARRING:* Daniel Darrieux

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Curzon | Following *The Court Waltzes* |

**L'Equipage** (French).
*PRODUCTION:* Pathé
*DIRECTION:* Anatole Litvak
*STARRING:* Jean Murat
Annabella

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Studio One | Following *Der Ammenkoenig* |

**The Court Waltzes** (German—French version).
*PRODUCTION:* Gunther Stapenhorst for Ufa
*DIRECTION:* Ludwig Berger
*STARRING:* Fernand Gravey
Jeanine Crispine

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Curzon | Aug. 1, indefinitely |

**Der Ammenkoenig** (German).
*DIRECTION:* Hans Steinhoff
*PRODUCTION:* Tobis

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Studio One | Aug. 1, indefinitely |

## *Feature Films for August Release*

This is not a complete list of current releases, but a *W.F.N.* selection. While all poor and mediocre films are omitted from the list, inclusion does not necessarily infer outstanding merit. For the guidance of our readers, films starred in *Review of Reviews* are again starred.

**Maid of Salem** (Paramount) *
*DIRECTOR:* Frank Lloyd
*STARRING:* Claudette Colbert
Fred MacMurray
Bonita Granville
E. E. Clive

**Man in Possession** (M.G.M.) *
*DIRECTOR:* W. S. Van Dyke
*STARRING:* Jean Harlow
Robert Taylor

**The Dominant Sex** (Wardour)
*DIRECTOR:* Herbert Brenon
*STARRING:* Phillips Holmes
Diana Churchill

**Michael Strogoff** (Radio)
*DIRECTOR:* George Nicholls, jun.
*STARRING:* Anton Walbrook
Elizabeth Allan
Margot Grahame
Akim Tamiroff
Fay Bainter

**Moonlight Sonata** (United Artists—Pall Mall)
*DIRECTOR:* Lothar Mendes
*STARRING:* Paderewski
Marie Tempest
Charles Farrell
Barbara Greene

**Nancy Steele is Missing** (20th Century-Fox)
*DIRECTOR:* George Marshall
*STARRING:* Victor McLaglen
Peter Lorre
Walter Connolly
June Lang

**One in a Million** (20th Century-Fox)
*DIRECTOR:* Sidney Lanfield
*STARRING:* Sonja Henie
Don Ameche
Adolphe Menjou

**Song of the Road** (Sound City)
*DIRECTOR:* John Baxter
*STARRING:* Bransby Williams
Davy Burnaby
Muriel George

**Stolen Holiday** (Warner Bros.)
*DIRECTOR:* Michael Curtiz
*STARRING:* Kay Francis
Claude Rains
Ian Hunter
Alison Skipworth

**Stowaway** (20th Century-Fox)
*DIRECTOR:* William A. Seiter
*STARRING:* Shirley Temple
Robert Young
Alice Faye

*A selection of Films recently made, or still in production, on*

# Eastman Panchromatic Super-X Negative

*—the world's leading Motion Picture Film Stock*

## BRITISH PRODUCTIONS

**ASSOCIATED BRITISH PICTURES**

| | Photography by |
|---|---|
| Old Boy | Claude Friese-Greene |
| Over She Goes | Otto Kanturek |

**ASSOCIATED TALKING PICTURES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Keep Fit | John W. Boyle |

**BRITISH INTERNATIONAL PICTURES**

| | |
|---|---|
| Let's Make a Night of It | Claude Friese-Greene and Otto Kanturek |

**BRITISH LION**

| | |
|---|---|
| Leave It To Me | George Stretton |

**DORIAN PRODUCTIONS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Man Without a Home | Jan Stallich and Phil Tannura |

**FITZPATRICK PRODUCTIONS**

| | |
|---|---|
| The Bells of St. Mary | Hone Glendinning |
| The Last Rose of Summer | Hone Glendinning |

**FOX-BRITISH**

| | |
|---|---|
| Bone of Contention | Ronald Neame |
| Londonderry Air | Ronald Neame |
| Wise Guys | Stanley Grant |

**GAINSBOROUGH PICTURES**

| | Photography by |
|---|---|
| Oh, Mr. Porter | Arthur Crabtree |
| Said O'Reilley to McNab | Arthur Crabtree |

**GAUMONT-BRITISH**

| | |
|---|---|
| A Shilling for Candles | Bernard Knowles |
| Dr. Syn | Jack Cox |
| Gangway | Glen McWilliams |
| Non-Stop New York | Mutz Greenbaum |

**G.S. PRODUCTIONS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Why Pick On Me? | Geoffrey Faithfull |
| Father Steps Out | Geoffrey Faithfull |

**IMPERATOR FILMS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Victoria the Great (with Technicolor Sequence, also on Kodak stock) | F. A. Young |

**JACK BUCHANAN PRODUCTIONS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Smash and Grab | Roy Clark and Henry Harris |

**MANCUNIAN FILMS**

| | Photography by |
|---|---|
| Penny Pool | Germaine Berger |

**PREMIERE-STAFFORD**

| | |
|---|---|
| The Return of a Stranger | James Wilson |

**PHOENIX FILMS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Brief Ecstasy | Henry Harris and Ronald Neame |

**TRIANGLE FILMS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Under A Cloud | Hone Glendinning |

**VICTOR SAVILLE PRODUCTIONS**

| | |
|---|---|
| South Riding | H. Stradling |

**VIKING FILMS**

| | |
|---|---|
| Shooting Stars | Desmond Dickinson |

**WARNER BROS.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Have You Come For Me? | Basil Emmott |
| From The Dark Stairway | Robert Lapresle |
| Change For a Sovereign | Robert Lapresle |

**WAINWRIGHT PRODUCTIONS**

| | |
|---|---|
| School For Husbands | Phil Tannura |

## AMERICAN PRODUCTIONS

**COLUMBIA**

| | Photography by |
|---|---|
| Professional Juror | Freulich |
| Once A Hero | Walker and Freulich |
| With Kind Regards | Siegler |

**METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER**

| | |
|---|---|
| Day At The Races | Ruttenburg and Seitz |
| Marie Waleska | Freund |
| The Emperor's Candlesticks | Rosson |
| Broadway Melody of 1937/8 | Daniels |
| Firefly | Marsh and De Vinna |
| Saratoga | June |
| You'll Be Married by Noon | Smith |
| General Hospital | Seitz |

**PARAMOUNT**

| | |
|---|---|
| Exclusive | Mellor |
| Angel | Lang |
| Tight Wad | Sharp and Perry |
| Artists and Models | Milner |
| Easy Living | Tetzlaff |
| Souls At Sea | Gerstad |
| Forlorn River | Holleberger and Miller |

**R K O**

| | Photography by |
|---|---|
| Mexican Quarter | Musuraca |
| Super Sleuth | August |
| New Faces of 1937 | Hunt and Marley |
| You Can't Beat Love | Metty |
| Vivacious Lady | De Grasse |
| Easy Going | Mackenzie |
| Take the Heir | Musuraca |

**UNIVERSAL**

| | |
|---|---|
| West Coast Limited | Bredell |
| Love in a Bungalow | Krasner |
| Reported Missing | Robinson |
| Armoured Car | Cortez |
| The Road Back | Robinson and Mescall |
| One Hundred Men and a Girl | Valentine |

**TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX**

| | |
|---|---|
| You Can't Have Everything | Andriot |
| Escape From Love | Jackson |
| Sing and Be Happy | Clark |
| Armoured Taxi | D. Clark |
| Thin Ice | Cronjager |
| Lancer Spy | McGill |

| | Photography by |
|---|---|
| Born Reckless | D. Clark |
| Jones Family | Snyder |
| Wild and Woolly | Jackson |

**WARNER BROS.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Mr. Dodd Takes The Air | Edeson |
| Varsity Show | Polito |
| First Lady | Hickox |
| Gentlemen After Midnight | Van Trees |
| Angle Shooter | Todd |
| That Certain Woman | Haller |
| Emile Zola | Gaudio |
| Ever Since Eve | Barnes |
| The Perfect Specimen | Rosher |

**REPUBLIC**

| | |
|---|---|
| Rhythm On The Clouds | E. Miller |
| It Might Happen To You | Marta |

**SELZNICK** (Independent)

| | |
|---|---|
| Prisoner of Zenda | Howe and Glennan |

**GOLDWYN**

| | |
|---|---|
| Dead End | Toland |

**INDEPENDENT**

| | |
|---|---|
| I Cover The War | Neuman |
| The Californian | Neuman |

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WORLD FILM NEWS

AMATEUR AND TECHNICAL SECTION

# The film—its theory and practice

by

Paul Burnford, A.R.P.S.

## *The Black and White Film*

THE film is too often considered as a medium for the exact reproduction of reality and it is thus that so many film makers come unhinged. Creation, not imitation should be sought. The accomplishment of the latter is, in any case, well-nigh impossible, owing to unavoidable technical deficiences.

These are: (*a*) The picture having to be rendered in black and white (colour will be dealt with later). (*b*) The two dimensional limitations. (*c*) The necessity of viewing the screen in a darkened room or theatre.

But by these very limitations the film derives its powers of expression, and thus becomes a powerful force for entertainment, education and propaganda. Analysing these deficiences individually, it will be seen that each can be utilised to progress the whole artistically.

(*a*) In nature, colour and tone are always present, but in cinema, tone only is available as a series of shades varying from black to white. Retention or even creation of atmosphere can thereby be gained and thus a film takes on its various moods. For example, I recently saw a winter landscape which, when reproduced on a screen, achieved a far more typical atmosphere than the original. This was desirous as the impression of winter was thus accentuated.

Closely allied to tone is the question of luminosity, which can be increased or decreased as desired. This is partly due to the transmission of light through the film. By combining this with sufficient under or over-exposure to increase or decrease the contrast respectively, and using filters, further atmospheric results can be derived accordingly.

In the film, with its quick succession of images, shots, scenes and sequences, speed of comprehension is an essential factor, and thus monochrome, with quicker powers of absorption than colour achieves this object.

(*b*) The fact of the film having only two dimensions is probably its greatest asset, for thereby the director has greater control over his selection of subject or part thereof. Not only selection by area covered with the camera, but also selection by focus. Combine this with the film's all-powerful force of editing, and the director has control over space and time. In other words, the succession of shots need not be in the order of actual time, but can be arranged in the order desired by the director to make up his sequence.

And similarly with space. Two or more entirely separate shots can be interconnected even if they actually existed in different places, and have no relation whatsoever.

An example occurred in a film in which steeplejacks were engaged in cleaning the Statue of Justice on the summit of the Old Bailey. The order of shots were: (i) A slow vertical pan from a crowded street up to the steeplejacks. (ii) Looking down from a great height on to the streets and buildings below. (iii) M.S. of steeplejacks. (iv) Looking down on to other streets and buildings. (v) C.U. of steeplejacks.

The effect on the audience was to accentuate the precariousness and danger of the location by intercutting the aforementioned looking down shots. Now not only were the latter filmed in entirely different localities to where the steeplejacks were working (one was shot from the dome of St. Paul's, and the other from the roof of Shell Mex), but on entirely different days. And still more important, the first two groups of steeplejacks are different men and were shot at entirely different times to the last group.

(*c*) The ideal and essential form in which to view a film is in a darkened room or theatre. If a small rectangular screen occupying a comparatively small space in a vast hall or theatre, has the power to hold the attention of an audience of hundreds, surely some reason must be attributed to its power of commanding concentration. The apparent reason is that the absence of extraneous light other than that on the screen itself, enables the audience to concentrate in full force thereon, and the visual sense, being the most active under the conditions mentioned is allowed full, uninterrupted play. (The presence of sound introduces other problems.)

By comparing the responsiveness of audiences to a given film shown in different theatres under varying intensities of auditorium lighting, the results were found to be in almost direct proportion to the darkness of the theatre.

A film should not necessarily be blamed for its faults until these considerations have been first fully investigated.

## *The Colour Film*

The introduction of colour alters the aforementioned values of the black and white film. Colour is permissible provided it is used creatively to enhance the artistic values, but the moment it is used simply to displace black and white it becomes valueless, the film immediately ceasing to be creative.

An understanding of accepted colour reactions will greatly simplify the work. For instance, red tends to excite violence or passion, orange and yellow stimulate, blue depresses, and green is soothing and restful. By using colours either harmoniously or discordantly, one with the other, further control over the emotions can be excited.

The only reasonable use of colour up to the present has been by Disney and the cartoonists, Len Lye with his abstracts, certain puppet films, and the ballroom sequence in *Becky Sharp*. With the exception of the last-mentioned, all have been fantasy in some form or another.

Many other subjects, however, could easily be undertaken by the amateur. A documentary of agricultural work at different seasons of the year might well be composed of colours having a progressive influence. Emphasis could be laid on the gleaming red of the plough churning up the rich brown earth, the sweat of energy on the healthy sun tanned faces of the workers, the colours of the flowers and trees and foliage, and the golden autumnal hues seen under a deep blue sky.

Another interesting project is the filming of a sunset in stop motion. The effect is one of extraordinary beauty as the colours blend and mix one into another. The medium of cinema alone can achieve such a spectacle.

The prophecies of colour completely ousting black and white is surely a most undesirable state of affairs, for surely there is room for each to progress along parallel paths. Only by such progression can the cinema of the future hope to thrive.

# FILM SOCIETIES AND CLUBS

**FILM PHOTO AND LEAGUE:** Hon. Secretary, H. Cuthbertson, Esq., 3 Somerset Terrace, London, W.C.1. (Tel. EUSton 4829).

Mr. Sydney W. Cole lectured to the League on Monday, July 5th, giving an illuminating description of the technical development of films during the century. At the same meeting *Revolt of the Fishermen* (a study of the fishing strike) was screened and criticised.

The first issue of "Left Film Front," the bulletin of the League, has been published, price 1*d*. It contains, among other interesting material, details of the Left Book Club Summer School, to be held from July 31st to August 14th, when the League will be projecting and discussing films, and exhibiting projectors, cameras, equipment and literature. A film is to be made at the School, and any suggestions as to themes suitable for the background of Digswell Park House (where the school is being held) are welcome. It may be a story film, one of working-class history, or of a propaganda nature, in one reel.

**MANCHESTER AND SALFORD FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, R. Cordwell, Esq., 13 Milwain Drive, Heaton Chapel, Stockport.

The autumn session of British and continental films of artistic, cultural and scientific value, will be held at the Rivoli Cinema, Rusholme, Manchester, on Sundays, September 26th, October 24th, November 21st and December 19th at 7.30 p.m. Features will be selected from the following (amongst others): *Student of Prague*, *Kuple Wampe*, *Fredlös*, *Die Ewige Maske* and *The Robber Symphony*. Later it is hoped to obtain *The New Gulliver*, *We From Kronstadt*, *La Kermesse Héroïque* and *La Bandera*. Shorts will include outstanding examples of experimental and technical achievements, and discussions on the films shown will be arranged occasionally.

The Society aims at a membership of 500 this year—there is seating accommodation for 1,000. Additional activities will be dependent on the support forthcoming. Subscription: 10*s*. per annum.

**TYNESIDE FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, M. C. Pottinger, Esq., c/o Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 1.

The Society has followed up the highly successful pioneer exhibition of Art Direction which it organised a year ago, by another pioneer exhibition—of the work of leading costume designers.

The artists represented were M. René Hubert and Professor Ernst Stern. M. Hubert lent sketches for *Fire Over England*, *Dark Journey*, *Under the Red Robe*, *Men Are Not Gods* and the now abandoned *Cyrano de Bergerac*. In addition there were a number of sketches for the costumes in the following stage productions: *Swing Along*, *Balalaika*, *Rise and Shine*, *Careless Rapture* and *Garden Party*. Professor Stern was represented by sketches for *Pagliacci*, *Land Without Music*, *Marriage of Corbal* and *Two Orphans*. Altogether there were almost 250 designs on view, many of which the Society was able to match with still photographs of the completed costumes as they appeared on the screen.

The sketches of the two artists afforded an interesting contrast in method. Those of Stern were in water-colour on ordinary drawing paper; those of Hubert were on tracing paper, and were remarkable not only for the great delicacy of their execution, but for the way in which they managed to suggest the shimmery and diaphanous quality of dresses and a real sense of texture and material. Many of the sketches bore pencilled instructions concerning the exact materials that were to be used, and a few had specimens of the material attached. M. Hubert's method, as he explained to the Chairman of the Society, is to design from the coloured material and not from the pigment.

A number of reproductions of Messel's designs for the costumes in *Romeo and Juliet* were also on display.

The exhibition, which lasted a week and was open to the public, was held in the Hatton Art Gallery, kindly lent by Professor Alan Mainds, of the Department of Fine Art, Armstrong College.

**ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Howard Cricks, Esq., 35 Russell Square, London, W.C.1.

An Exhibition of Kinematography, comprising Films, Stills and Apparatus will be held from November 13th to November 27th, 1937. The keynote of the Exhibition will be "The Film as a Social Force," and during its course, lectures and demonstrations of interest to both professionals and amateurs will be given. A competition, embracing all types of films, has been arranged, and a selection from the films receiving awards will be shown during the Exhibition. For the first time, the competition will include sections for 35 mm. films, not exceeding 2,000 feet in length, in monochrome or colour.

Under the Articles of Association of the Society Associateships are awarded to those members who satisfy the Council of their ability in one or other of the branches of photography, or the arts and sciences relating thereto; Fellowships are granted to those Associates who possess distinguished ability and originality.

Two points which may be emphasised are the very high standard which is required of applicants for the Fellowship, the basis of the qualifications being creative work; and that nothing in these recommendations prevents the Fellowship or Associateship being awarded on grounds of individual work or abilities, the extended qualifications being designed to cover cases where the applicants sole or principal qualifications are his share in the corporate production of motion pictures.

**WOLVERHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY:** Membership Secretary, Miss D. Boston, 60 Great Brickkiln Street. Programme Secretary, E. L. Packer, Esq., 58 Himley Crescent, Wolverhampton.

Mr. T. A. Warren, Director of Education for Wolverhampton, has been appointed President of the Society for the season 1937-38, and many prominent people have become patrons. Activities are suspended until October. Meetings to illustrate the use of film as propaganda are among the plans made for the coming season.

**ACE MOVIES:** Hon. Secretary, Channon Wood, Esq., 15 Openview, S.W.18. Studio, 90 High Street Mews, Wimbledon, S.W.19.

Ace Movies is forming a documentary group to specialise in the production of films of social and educational importance, and it is possible that by the time this appears in print the first production will be under way. This is a new departure for this club which has in the past specialised, with some degree of success, in photoplay production. This latter type of production is not being discarded, the production of documentary films being supplementary to the club's normal programme.

Vacancies occur for a few active members, and visitors are always welcome at the studio on Thursdays and Sundays, between 8.30 and 11 p.m.

**BLACKHEATH FILM CLUB:** Hon. Secretary, John Gibson, Esq., 6 St. German's Place, London, S.E.3.

Production No. 8 is now in the hands of the editors, and the Club is in the throes of holidays. Plans are afoot for Production No. 9, which should be at the shooting stage after the Gala Week in October. Meanwhile the Documentary Unit is working on a film of Kent for the Amateur Services Club's contest, using several of the Acting Members in a series of "family incidents" as the necessary continuity links. The Unit, which works independently from the Club as far as the financial side is concerned, has joined the B.A.S.C. *en masse*, and is very keen to participate in the movement.

It is hoped that other Societies will visit the Blackheath Film Club during the Gala Week—details of which will be issued later.

**ELTHAM CINE SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Miss V. D. White, 36 Craigton Road, Eltham, S.E.9.

The Society is now at work on the production of *The Emperor's New Clothes*, a colour film in sound. The use of colour in interiors has necessitated considerable increase in the amount of light needed, and this has been made possible by the construction of additional lighting units. A new microphone has resulted in far better quality of recording than hitherto, and the only trouble at the moment is a bad echo in the studio. It is hoped to overcome this by judicious use of drapings, etc.

Future productions include a colour film to be made on the Cornish coast, and a new full-length story film which goes into production in the late autumn.

**WEST ESSEX FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, F. J. Philpott, Esq., 7 Wellington Road, East Ham, E.6.

On June 26th members of the Society attended the meeting of the Kine Federation of the Royal Photographic Society at 35 Russell Square.

Shooting has commenced on the Society's new film, *Hiking*. The scenario was written by Mr. S. Martin, and Mr. L. Shepard is directing. It is hoped that shooting will continue during the next few weeks.

Good progress is being made on the several films which members have in hand.

*(Club News—continued)*

**METEOR FILM PRODUCING SOCIETY:** Membership Secretary, Miss Peggy L. Clark, 15 North Gardner Street, Glasgow, W.1. Programme Secretary, Ian S. Ross, Esq., 80 Buchanan Street, Glasgow, C.1.

The Society is producing a film at the request of the Scottish Church Film Guild. The scenario has been specially written for the Guild by the Scots author, Angus MacVicar.

The Society has been corresponding over a considerable period with H.M. Customs and Excise, who have been demanding payment of entertainment duty on shows held in the studio since the inception of the Society. As these shows were purely for the instruction of members, and generally consisted of shots from films which members had in production, or of films made by the Society, the Council of the Meteor Society considers that the question is of importance to the whole amateur cine movement.

After much discussion, H.M. Customs and Excise completely abandoned their claims—a matter which should be of interest to everyone engaged in amateur production.

**WEST MIDDLESEX AMATEUR CINE CLUB:** Hon. Secretary, Eric H. Whittleton, Esq., 39 Derwentwater Road, Acton, W.3.

The Club is now preparing its 1937-38 programme. A 9.5 mm. film will be produced when the present production, *It Can't Happen Here*, is completed. The latter film has resulted in some excellent shots, which will repay the energy spent in erecting various indoor sets, including a night club, snack bar and book shop.

Holiday time finds members departing to all parts of Great Britain and Europe. They will, needless to say, spend some considerable time shooting whilst on tour, and judging by the discussions that have taken place, some original ideas on "holiday scripts" will be forthcoming.

A visit to a film studio is being arranged, when special attention will be paid to the sound recording outfits used.

The last Club film *Fame* (16 mm.), has been shown to many amateur societies, and generally commended.

**WIMBLEDON CINE CLUB:** Hon. Secretary, C. W. Watkins, Esq., 79 Mostyn Road, Merton Park, S.W.19.

A most successful two days showing of the film of local Coronation festivities was given in the Wimbledon Town Hall on June 30th and July 1st. The film was shown continuously from 8 p.m. on both evenings, and proceeds are being given to the Mayor's Benevolent Fund. The Mayor, at a private presentation of the film, expressed his great pleasure at the result, and has decided to present a copy to the John Evelyn Club for historical purposes.

Members of the Wimbledon Club visited the Royal Photographic Society recently, when the first meeting of the newly-formed Federation of Cinematograph Societies was held. The meeting was well attended—an excellent sign of the support this new movement is likely to receive.

**MERSEYSIDE FILM UNIT:** The Secretaryship of the Society was erroneously credited to Mr. Cyril Ray in our July issue. Miss Muriel Bird is the Secretary, and her address is 5/6 Bluecoat Chambers, School Lane, Liverpool, 1.

# FILMING BRITAIN—Article No. 1

## Outlines to assist Amateurs entering the B.A.S.C. Contest

### by Evelyn Spice

TO help all Amateurs to have a clear idea of what kind of films are wanted for the Amateur Services Club contests, I shall outline here some suggestions on all four subjects.

HOME PLANNING
HYGIENE
ARCHITECTURE
SCOTTISH YOUTH HOSTELS

### HOME PLANNING

Films showing how a family might convert an old-fashioned home into a modern one, with some labour and not too much money; taking any home and showing how it could be made a more pleasant one, a more convenient place for the housewife and a more convenient place for the whole family—including father.

OR, films about a housewife, working out for herself how she could plan out her whole week to better advantage, have more leisure time and not get so tired, if certain things were done, etc.

There are many points of view from which the film could be shot; the mother's, perhaps, trying to convince the men of the house that certain changes are necessary or trying to get them to remember that she is only five foot-two and that the shelf must be a little lower than father's chin if she is to reach it with any ease. There could be a good deal of fun worked into the film and it should be a pleasant family affair.

These are only suggestions and should not be taken as the beginning and end of subjects. I should like to see some background to the film with locations in a village, town, or city, and the family introduced and set against that background so that the audience really feels they have become acquainted with the people.

*NOTE.—If anybody wants a few suggestions about things to remember in kitchen planning, etc. I shall be glad to send them along.*

### HYGIENE

Main emphasis on cleanliness and proper feeding. Here the film may be set in a home, hospital, crêche, district, etc., emphasising the need for wise feeding, balanced meals, preparation of fresh vegetables, etc., serving of meals, and use of plenty of hot water to combat the grime that settles down from city chimneys. Here the film can be either a piece of journalism outlining the story as the film-maker sees it, or a human approach through people who plan improved conditions.

### ARCHITECTURE

The main thing to avoid here is a picture composed entirely of stills, particularly if the film is a silent one.

The films might deal with the architects themselves and their work; the relationship of housing to family life; the story of modern architecture; town planning, etc.

### SCOTTISH YOUTH HOSTELS

Here there is the opportunity of showing not only how cheap accommodation permits great freedom of travel for students, but also the strong link with historical times that exists in Scotland to-day. One particular section of country could be dealt with, but here again an intimate knowledge of its history and associations should be acquired before scripting. The Scots student might for example select the exact route of Prince Charlie on his long chase over the hills. But, no doubt, Scots students know more about this than I do and I can only suggest what I, as an outsider, would like to see filmed.

Of course, it must be borne in mind that the film subjects are in no way limited to the above examples, for the AMATEUR SERVICES CLUB'S main purpose is to discover fresh ideas and points of view.

For full details of the Club's Contest write to Miss Evelyn Spice, Oxford House, 9-15 Oxford Street, London, W.1.

An Amateur Documentary Film Panel, which will act as intermediary between amateurs and public service organisations who wish 16 mm. films made, has been appointed by the British Film Institute and the Royal Photographic Society.

It will work in close association with the Amateur Services Club, and it is hoped that the existence of a body prepared to act as intermediary between those who provide the subject matter and those who produce the film will stimulate the production of films along social service lines.

It is planned to circulate and preserve selected films through the medium of the National Film Library, which is associated with the British Film Institute. The co-operation of professional film interests has been secured, and representatives from the Associated Realist Film Producers, the Association of Cine-Technicians, and the British Sub-standard Association have accepted invitations to sit on the panel.

Amateur workers or societies who wish to be included in the Panel's register should write to: The Secretary, The Amateur Documentary Film Panel, the British Film Institute, 4 Great Russell Street, London, W.C.1.

# HOW TO BUILD SETS - No. 3

by H. Chevalier, F.P.S., A.S.E.

With completion of the sequences on the composite kitchen set preparation of the equally important but smaller sets begin. The supporting scenes in the script call for four widely differing settings. (1) Police station charge-room; (2) Steel mill manager's office; (3) Hotel bedroom; (4) Village pub. Each setting is obtained by using various sections of the kitchen set in a different manner.

Last month I explained how the set could be built in sections using hessian on deal framing. We therefore possess nine separate "flats," as they are called, one containing a doorway, marked E, (see plan shown last month) two window flats B and H, one arch piece J together with four plain "flats" A, C, D and F.

Having struck the kitchen set, we proceed to erect the Police Station setting. In the script the scene is described as follows:

"The action commences in a corridor of a police station, outside the door opening into the charge room. The players open the door, proceed into the charge room, where further action is played before the sergeant's desk, terminating with the prisoner being led to the cells."

Nothing very difficult in that description, so we construct the set as follows: across the end of the studio (18 ft. in width) erect flats D, H, and J in the given order, 2 ft. from the end wall. This provides a wall 15 ft. wide, containing a 3 ft. opening. Cover the wall with plain white ceiling paper, first letting a piece of three-ply in section H fill the window opening, finally painting the lower 4 ft. of the wall with dark brown water colour paint.

Behind the opening and against the wall hang a grey curtain making sure the fabric is taut, otherwise wrinkles will show when this back cloth is lighted from the side.

## Charge desk

For the charge desk, the table is used from the kitchen set increased in height 1ft. 6 in., by nailing a length of 3 by 2 rough deal to each leg. Cover the front, two sides and top, with 3-ply, papering the sides with white ceiling paper, completing by spraying with coat of dark brown water paint. Place the charge desk in a central position midway between the D and H sections, leaving a space of about 3 ft. between desk and wall.

To obtain the corridor effect called for, and allowing for a slight panning of the camera, erect sections F, E, and A in position 8 ft. in front of the back "flat," making sure that section E (the door section) is in line with the charge desk. Cover this "flat" with ceiling paper panelling the door with ½ inch beading, after papering, painting the whole door and the lower four feet of wall dark brown as on the back "flat."

For the corridor shot, we have now 14 ft. 3 in. of wall containing a 2 ft. 6in. door and 10 ft. of space between the wall of the studio and the "flat." The floor of the studio being wood is left without covering and the only props necessary are pen, ink and charge book on the sergeant's desk, a wastepaper basket, wall calendar (used in the shot) and various notices on the wall. The very bareness assists the cold hard atmosphere required on the screen.

When the final dissolve is reached, the door "flat" can be cheated round to give a long shot of the prisoner being conducted to the cells (through the arch) with the group standing before the charge desk, seen through the open door from the corridor. For reverse shots, the door "flat" is turned round the opposite way, and cheated round as required.

## Manager's office

*Steel Works Manager's Office:* This particular set is very simple consisting only of two walls. In the script the scene is described as "A large room with a view of the steel works, seen through a window behind the works manager's desk. The door is situated on the left-hand side and all the necessary action takes place between the door and desk.

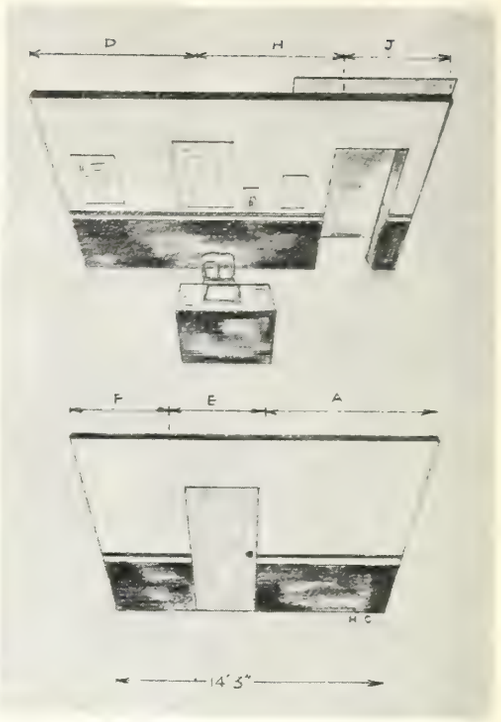
This time we place the back "flat" along the 20 ft. wall of the studio leaving a 4 ft. space between the "flat" and the wall. Section A is then erected with the left hand end one foot from the 18 ft. wall; section D is erected in the same line, 5 ft. 3 in. away. The lower three feet of this opening is then filled by laying section C down sideways on its 3 ft. side, behind the opening. The remainder of the opening is the window and 1 in. laths are nailed across to represent the window frames.

At the left-hand side of the "flat," section F is erected, 2 ft. from the left hand end of section A, to produce a 5 ft. wall in place of the original 7 ft., without cutting the section. We now have a 3 ft. space between the back of section F and the 18 ft. wall of the studio. Door section E and section H are then erected in line with F. For this shot the door will have to be reversed and hung on the opposite side to open inward.

The walls and both sides of the door are covered with imitation wood wallpaper hung horizontally using a good size paste. Paint the window laths black and stretch fine black net across the opening behind the laths. This will diffuse the background and eliminate the use of glass in the window. Outside the window, on the studio wall paste white ceiling paper, covering an area about 9 ft. 6 in. wide. On this background, paint with light and dark grey water paint a rough representation of a steel mill exterior. Absolute accuracy is not essential, as the backing will be out of focus during the takes.

In the centre of section A, paste a plan of the works, this can be drawn specially, using imagination. A map occupies a similar position on section F. As a carpet will cover most of the floor, cover the remainder that appears in the shot with hessian and brown paper, varnishing the paper when dry with copal varnish. The desk occupies the space in front of the window with a bent steel chair at the desk and one on the left of the desk. In the corner stands a tubular steel hat rack. All these props are hired.

The only other necessity is a black curtain, on the wall outside the door and the setting is more or less complete. Letter trays, inkstand, blotters, business papers, etc., are then required to complete the minor details of the setting, and the scene can be shot.



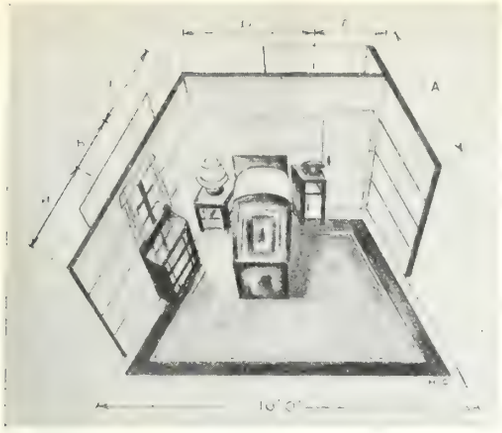

**Police Station ¼" scale**

*Hotel Bedroom:* The reason for shooting the hotel bedroom scenes immediately after the mill manager's office sequence is economy, for we can use the same sections, in a different way, preserving the fairly expensive wood wall paper.

The hotel bedroom set is erected across the 18 ft. width of the studio, placing section H, B, and F on the left-hand side, 8 ft. from the studio wall. Butting on to this "flat" are sections D and E, at right angles, with section A at right angles on the right-hand side overlapping 2 ft. as before, in the previous set.

In this setting section B is used for the first time and will need touching up, painting the window frame aluminium. Outside the window a white curtain will be needed, tight back against the studio wall, together with the usual black curtain outside the door. The props in this scene are simple and few: a walnut bed, a bed-side table and the table lamp on the right-hand side of the bed, and a bed-side cabinet holding the house telephone on the left-hand side. Floor covering is carpet, so the same floor covering as used in the last scene can again be used, if desired. The window curtains are printed cretonne with a valance of the same material, and a tallboy standing directly in front of the window. The table lamp must be practical as it is used in the shot completing the setting.

*The Village Pub:* We have now reached the final setting in the film, and perhaps the most complicated from the props standpoint. Quite a lot of action takes place on this set, requiring a large number of set-ups so the set is rather larger than would otherwise be necessary.



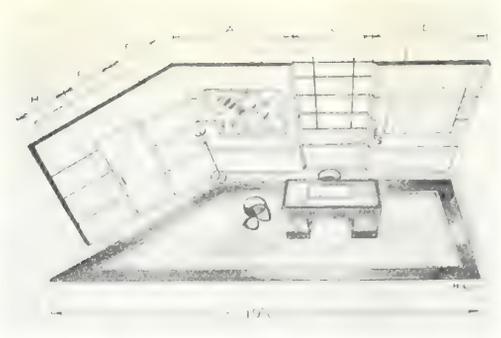
**Hotel Bedroom $\frac{1}{4}$″ Scale**

The left hand wall is constructed from sections B and C, the back wall from sections E, A, H and F and the bar is divided into the sections by the cross wall, section J with section D butted on. For the bar itself, a curved counter is built from the edge of the arch opening to the end of section A, a distance of 12 ft.

This bar counter is constructed from three-ply, and rough 3 and 2 deal battens, but before actually building the counter, the exact dimensions of the beer engine hired for the shot must be taken into account. The only parts needed are the pump handles, the rest can be faked.

Behind the counter, a set of shelves are required constructed from $\frac{1}{4}$ in. three-ply separated by 1 in. round dowelling. Along the edge of the shelves tack on some $\frac{1}{2}$ in. moulding to impart an appearance of solidity. The shelves continue right past the opening to the end of section F.

To save expense and time the lower section of the shelves can be composed of beer crates laid lengthways two tiers high and the shelves built on top. With the exception of sections J and B the "flats" are covered with wood wallpaper, therefore it will be cheaper to cover these remaining "flats" with the same paper rather than repaper the whole bar.



**Steel Mill Manager's Office $\frac{1}{4}$″ Scale**

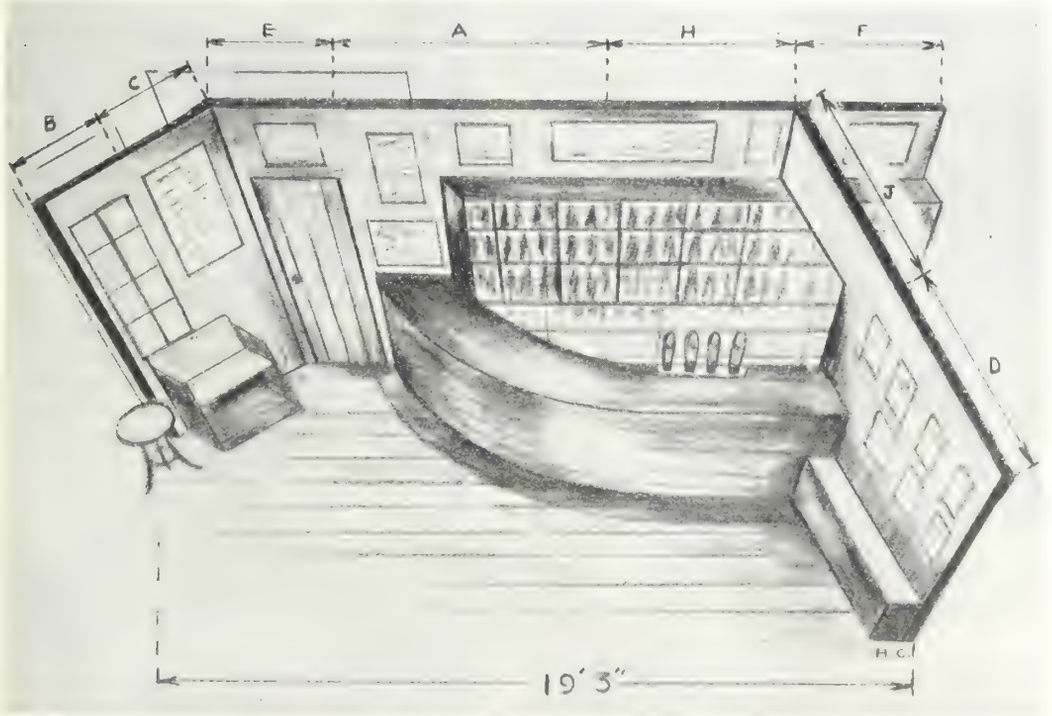
The next operation is to spray all the walls with a thin coat of medium grey water paint to give the wood an aged appearance. The shelving and bar can be painted dark brown, or sprayed with one of the many ready mixed mahogany floor stains. If any are available, one or two mirrors placed behind the shelves will brighten the background considerably.

To line the shelves various whisky and gin bottles are required, pint and half pint glasses, dummy cigarette packets, biscuits, etc. On the counter a glass sandwich cover will be required together with various beer and cigarette advertising showcards.

On the walls old prints or maps will help to convey the homely atmosphere of a village pub. Two or three wooden forms together with wood topped tables and a little sawdust on the floor will help produce "atmosphere."

The final requirements are a black curtain outside the door and the cretonne window curtains, this time sprayed lightly with dark grey paint. The window frame can be repainted dark grey, if desired, completing a very authentic little setting. The final action in the pub takes place at night after closing time, providing a fine opportunity for dramatic lighting, as a contrast to the previous cheerful lighting when the scene opens.

Next month, I will summarise the series, giving lighting and camera details, for future reference.




**Village Pub $\frac{1}{4}$″ Scale**

# Tests on Safety Film

Here are the results of some tests carried out on Safety Film :—

One 16 mm. safety film was stopped in the gate of a projector employing a 400 watt projector lamp with the safety shutter out of action. The photographic image disappeared in one and a half seconds, after this the film shrivelled and turned brown, giving off slight fumes, but it showed no signs of taking fire.

A 50 ft. spool of film was treated as follows. The spool was rested on a wire gauze so that the inner end of the spool was over the edge of the gauze. This was rested on a tripod and a Bunsen flame was directed on to the overhanging open type part of the spool for fully five minutes. During this time the film melted and frothed and finally became a red-hot charred mass. After the Bunsen flame had been removed, a small flame flickered over the molten part of the film for 15 seconds and then went out.

In my opinion, the only conditions under which safety film will burn unaided for more than a few seconds, is when a long strip hanging vertically is heated at the lower end, so that the flame actually surrounds the unburnt film. Even under these circumstances the film will very slowly burn for not more than 30 seconds, for, as the burning portion falls off, the flame goes out almost immediately.

To make the film burn at all, the film has to be heated very thoroughly, e.g. by placing a Bunsen burner on it for 15 seconds, and if the film is only heated momentarily, it shrivels without taking fire.

It is practically impossible to make the film fire in a downward direction, however strongly it is heated initially.

By placing 50 feet of film on a metal container which was baked over a flame, a naked light placed over an outlet for gas escape failed to locate any flammable gases. A thousand watt projector lamp focussed on to a stationary safety film, minus safety shutter, melted the exposed film clean away in 30 seconds, without signs of smoke or flame, but there was positively no spread of the effect beyond that of the lighted area.

D. M.

## *A New Portable Screen*

From the U.S.A. comes a really excellent portable screen, really lightweight, really compact, and very efficient. The prices too are surprisingly reasonable.

One type employs an uncreasable fabric, almost like silk rubber, which, together with the collapsible stand, folds up into a small travelling case, and is but a few pounds in weight.

Another type, consists of a spring loaded roller, into which the screen is rolled, using silver beaded or fabric screens measuring up to 10 feet. The stand is constructed of light metal, and is very rigid, the metal screen container is hooked across the top, and the screen is pulled down to its proper limit and attached to hooks on the uprights.

There is nothing simpler on the market, neither is there anything to compare with its neatness, lightness and cost.

It is the very thing for travelling units, the last word in portability. I imagine it will be a boon to every non-theatrical user, as the smallest up to the largest screens can now be purchased in cases equivalent in length to one quarter of the total length of the screen.

The World Film News will be pleased to supply further information on application.

D. M.

# TECHNICAL TIT-BITS

By David Myers

Cleaning oil and dirt from film is quite a simple matter, but care has to be exercised. Two large pieces of soft clean rag and a bottle of methylated spirit is all that is required. Soak one piece of the material in the spirit, fold it, and proceed to draw the film through the folds under even pressure, in about three-foot lengths at a time. Do not allow the wet film to lie in folds, but immediately it is dry, polish both surfaces with the dry material and rewind on to another spool. It is absolutely important that the surface of the material be changed after each pull through of the film, otherwise scratching will result from the multiplication of dirt and grit on the surface.

* * * *

The indiscriminate cutting of a film when in the hands of a certain local cinema, nearly caused a riot. Finding a torn part of the film, the operator quite rightly cut it out with the scissors and of course a part of the sound track bearing a syllable of a word spoken went with it.

It happened to be a Tom Walls' picture where he called his partner "a blasted fool," but unfortunately the pronunciation was altered to "bastered fool" by the cutting of the "L"—Oh, hell!

* * * *

When rewinding a film always hold the film between the left thumb and first finger, putting light pressure on the outer edges of the film only. Never allow the fingers to come in contact with the emulsion surface as this scratches it. In a short while, no matter how fast you rewind, you will be able to detect whether the click you felt was a join, torn perforation, or a half-undone join. Never tighten up the film on a spool, but keep an even pressure on the "free" spool throughout the process of rewinding. Tightening up of the film on the spool by "skidding it," scratches the surfaces from beginning to end.

* * * *

Never turn out the lights when commencing a film show until such time as the picture is on the screen and sound is heard. This serves many purposes and obviates many risks and spoilt shows.

* * * *

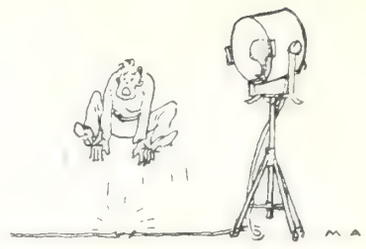
If you lose sound during projection, do not stop the projector, the picture itself is better than nothing, and secondly, how are you to know you have rectified the trouble when you cannot get sound until the machine *is* running?

* * * *

If you ever experience "rattles" coming from your loudspeaker, examine the speaker cabinet, such noises can usually be traced to foreign bodies such as loose screws or particles of grit responding to the frequences by jumping up and down within the cabinet.

* * * *

I was once called on a service visit to a cinema that had the "Squeals." Intermittently coming above the sound could be heard something likened only to that of a cat's cry. By a process of elimination, including that of a search for a cat in the loudspeakers, I discovered that a microphonic exciting lamp was responsible. A loose



filament in the lamp was transmitting the microphonic noises to the photo electric cell, and for your guidance, many strange noises can result from this source.

* * * *

The sound effect of a running train is often required, and a simple and effective way to do this is by cutting the track with a penknife at the point where the needle runs round and round in the centre of a gramophone record when it has finished playing. The cuts can be placed at even or uneven distances apart to give that "bom-e-de-bom" effect of the carriage wheels passing over the joints in the lines.

* * * *

Just for amusement, take a strip of film on which the sound track is "vacant" and with a fine pen, draw in an imaginary track with indian ink. Play it back through your reproducer and you will soon find a means of amusing your friends.

* * * *

Here is a formula for non-flam cement (not my own); one part each of glacial acetic acid, amyl acetate, and acetic ether, it is quite cheap too, but for convenience and reliable service try "Cinecraft" as sold in small bottles, once a joint is sealed with this cement, it never parts.

* * * *

What is a "Ghost"? No, I don't mean the one that creeps into your bedroom, but the one that creeps on to your projected picture in the form of extended white streaks over the blacks.

The cause of this is incorrect timing of the flicker shutter, which allows a part of the "moving" film to be projected to the screen instead of the "cover blade" of the shutter, cutting off the light as the film is being drawn to the stationary position in the aperture for projection. It is actually forward or backward in relation to the film move, thus projecting part of the moving film. The shutter is adjustable for this reason, and instructions for setting, to clear a ghost, are covered in the maintenance manuals.

* * *

It is rumoured that the Western Electric Company are producing a loudspeaker that will reproduce up to 14,000 cycles and which is to be no larger than a tea cup! But if they cannot record these fourteen thousand cycles on film at Busch House I know they can pohtograph them at the Hercules works, for after all, a cycle is a cycle whether it is chromium-plated or not !!!

* * * *

If there's anything you want to know, write to David Myers about it, c/o "*W.F.N.*" and enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

## *Non-flam is Flam to Cardiff - but . . .*

From the great City Hall, Cardiff, I learn that all non-flam 16 mm. film is regarded as inflammable and as such is deemed to be within the scope of the Cinematograph Act of 1909 as issued by the Home Office under Statutory Rules and orders 1923, No. 983.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Home Office itself still regards 16 mm. and acetate base film to be "slow burning" and therefore outside the limits of the Act, Cardiff has ideas of its own on the matter.

Whether such non-theatrical shows be held in licensed or unlicensed halls makes no difference, all shows must be notified to the authorities not less than seven days in advance of the actual performance.

A visit follows from an official of the Fire Brigade, who will dictate what must be done to ensure safety and what must not be done. You will be told that the shows must be held only in rooms or halls on the street level, that the projectors must be run off an alternative circuit from that of the lighting in the room in question, quite good points, but when it comes to totally enclosing the projector and limiting the amount of film to be shown in the programme because of fire risks—well, that's just going too far.

Whether the local fire authorities have discovered a way to fire such film on the projector or on the floor I do not know, but I seriously doubt it.

In the commercial cinemas where they are using highly inflammable nitrate film, and where even under the strictest regulations, fires do occur occasionally, one can understand strict supervision and control, and it leaves me wondering why Cardiff does not strike a new level in this respect.

Might I suggest that they provide the projectionists with asbestos suits and brass helmets? And, perhaps, it would be as well to provide the young lady ushers with tin knickers and corrugated iron pullovers.

Because, after all, everything will burn or melt when sufficient heat is applied—even steel will become a flaming mass of molten metal—but is it to be supposed for one moment, that non-flam film will burn at all, especially under the conditions in which it is used?

It is simply amazing that in a local Woolworths Stores one can still purchase highly inflammable celluloid rattles and toys which are capable collectively of cremating hundreds and thousands of innocent babies all for 3*d.* or 6*d.*

"Yes, sir," even in Cardiff itself, where they strive to curb the activities of the reds—whites and blues, including the nudist fans themselves—from showing their films. But for Cardiff's babies . . . a Viking's funeral is a fitting memorial.

---

Acoustical conditions at high altitudes are such as to enable the recording of voices on film at much greater distances from the microphone. There is practically no distortion, background or extraneous noise to contend with, and certainly unlimited scope for perfect noiseless recording.

So why not pump the air from the stratosphere into a sound stage and do the job properly?

*For*

# BETTER TEACHING

*and*

# BETTER ENTERTAINMENT

Once, an ancient cave dweller drew crude bison on smoke-blackened walls . . . a tonsured monk illuminated a vellum manuscript . . . a skilled carver in wood brought pictures to the early textbooks . . . photography made them clearer.
And today, textbooks are supplemented by pictures that live, pictures that illustrate and make real the scenes of history, that move to the classroom the laboratories of science, that give civics and other studies new meaning, that unfold the world's knowledge on the motion picture screen for your children and ours to study. That talkies are a major step forward in teaching technique is a certainty.

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MODEL 138 WITH 750 WATT ILLUMINATION

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The machine, known as the Filmosound 138, is ideal for home entertainment, and equally suited for educational, classroom and sales purposes.
The entire machine is contained in a single case, which also accommodates a 1,600 foot reel of film. In use, the combined projector and amplifier unit is removed from the case, while the cover serves as the baffle for the self-contained loud speaker. A new sound head has been designed for the reproducer, incorporating a rotating sound drum, fly-wheel and a floating idler. Voltages on exciter lamp and photocell are balanced automatically as the volume control is changed. Amplifier tubes are of the new metal type. Among the special features worthy of note are a new type of tilt device, operated by one hand, a motor rewind and a reel arm which can be attached quickly with a single screw. The projector finish is grey damaskeen, while the carrying case is covered grey fabricoid to match. Model 138C with 750 watt lamp and two speeds for either sound or silent films.

## *Other Filmosound Models*

### 130 FILMOSOUND

The ideal 16 mm. equipment for semi-permanent installation, giving a professional standard of brilliant steady pictures with perfectly synchronised sound, devoid of any "carry over" with consequent "flutter" in sustained notes. The 1,600 ft. film capacity permits 45 minutes continuous projection. Operates at 24 or 16 frames per second—silent films can also be shown.

### 120 FILMOSOUND

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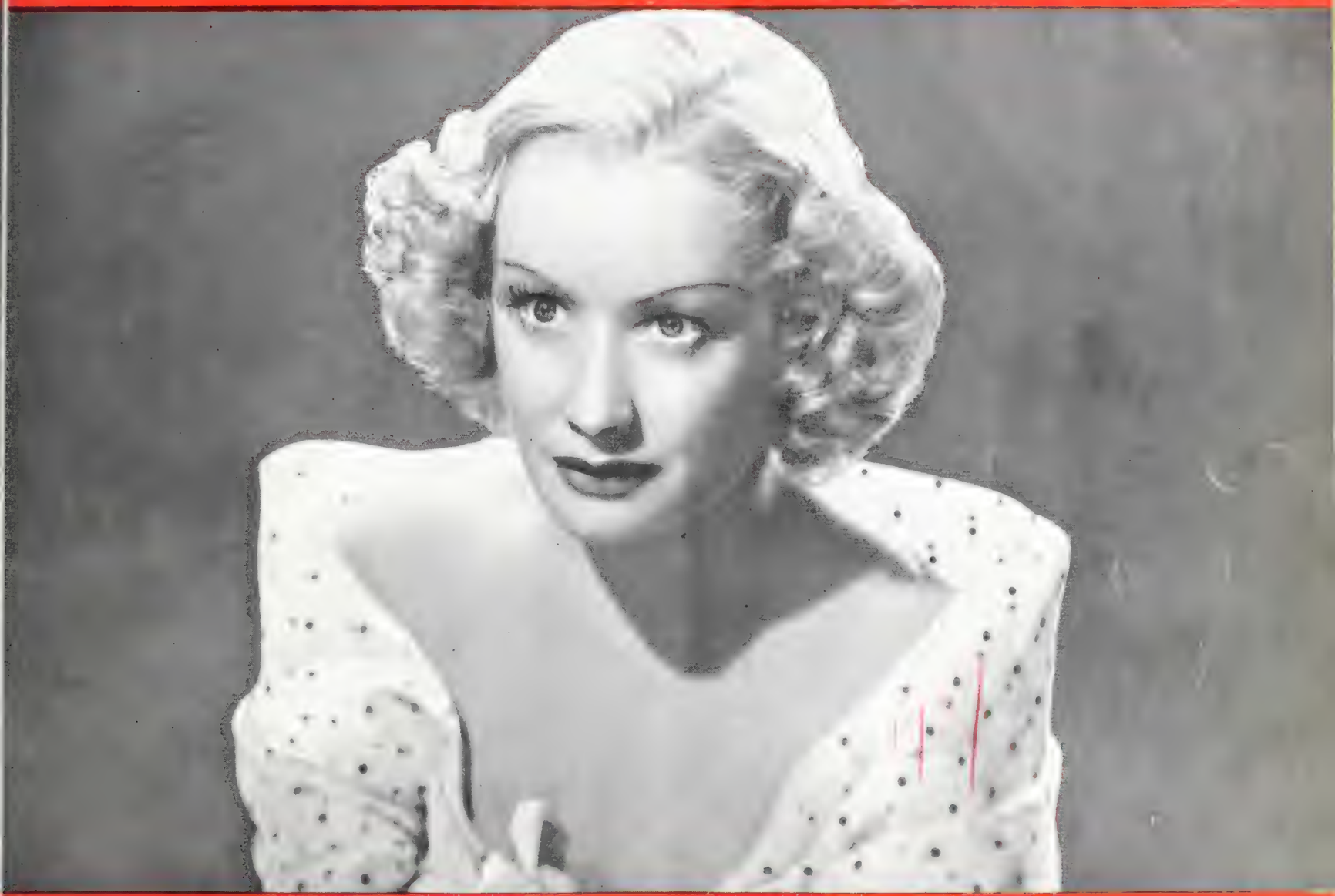

"THEY SAID I WAS CRAZY"—Erich von Stroheim

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FLORA AND FAUNA OF BRITISH FILMS

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AND TELEVISION PROGRESS
(INCORPORATING CINEMA QUARTERLY)

VOL. 2 NO. 6 PRICE: ONE SHILLING SEPTEMBER 1937

# "THEY SAID I WAS CRAZY"

## —VON STROHEIM

INTRODUCING "The Man You Love to Hate,"—Erich von Stroheim, the meteor in the celluloid constellations, the man who dared portray the senility of Central European royalty in the *Merry Widow*, the sophisticated pulse of the modern world in *Foolish Wives* and the *Blind Husbands* and the sordid world of Mammon in what was probably his masterpiece, *Greed*.

A relatively short time has elapsed since then, though long and eventful in the young history of the screen. Names have come and gone. What has happened to von Stroheim in that time?

To-day he speaks, but without the fire and enthusiasm of a man searching for new horizons. That fine creative *dæmon* seems somehow hushed.

"I am only an actor trying to get together some money," he says. And he talks mainly of the past, lashing out at the people and methods of the Hollywood scheme of things.

"I'm not frightened of talking. I say print everything. I was an outcast in Hollywood. I never had a swimming-pool and other elaborate things. I lived and I told the truth. But I was called a wastrel, a spendthrift. The dog was given a bad name, and it stuck.

"In 44th Street on Times Square there was the biggest sign in the world during the making of *Foolish Wives*. That was the birth certificate of Universal and my tombstone. In electric lights the production costs were advertised as being a million dollars. They said it was the first million dollar motion picture. It was a publicity scheme to put Universal on the map. Overhead charges rivalled the production costs. I was the scapegoat.

"But in *Foolish Wives* I started a new school in films, the real axis of things, love and sex which had been overlooked by producers who treated the public as infants. It was new and shocked the meddlers, people who had no sex outlet themselves. Freud has a name for them. As part of the publicity campaign, Universal invited twenty-two censors to come free of charge to Hollywood to view *Foolish Wives*. They came with their scissors. These people, some petty shyster politicians, drunk with their own importance, came, looked—and cut.

"Irving Thalberg as the personal representative of Carl Laemmle discharged me in the middle of making *Merry-Go-Round*. This was the young man who did not know anything about films then, but had initiative. I was broken-hearted.

"I then worked for the Goldwyn company who let me make *Greed*. I thought people after the Great War were ripe for corned beef and not chocolate éclairs, so I chose to make this film from a novel by Frank Norris. Norris was a disciple of Zola and the school of realism he had dreamed of. I worked nine months on the film and then the Goldwyn company merged when I was cutting. It became Metro - Goldwyn - Mayer. Irving Thalberg again popped up, having joined the company. My film was taken away from me, and I was out. It was given to a thirty-dollar-a-week cutter. I have not seen *Greed* myself."

To use von Stroheim's own words the case against him "was mounting like an avalanche."

"They (presumably the executives) hate people with positive minds. No twelve people can write a book or paint a work of art. My success was that I did everything myself, and it did have the stamp of personality. I was the first to use trucking shots. I was the first to use polished floors, real glass windows and silks. They said I was crazy. Nasty and malicious stories were told about me. I could take no action; they knew I had no money. But I didn't want to, anyway; it would mean putting myelf on the same level as themselves. I have my own mind, and that is the worst thing I can say about myself."

In a scheme of things where yes-men flourish, it is logical that the independent spirit should be stoned. Yet they who cast the stones were themselves not innocent of the things von Stroheim was accused of. It is interesting to note that this man about whom the legend grew that he was the prince of spendthrifts, a legend that was partially responsible in hounding him to an undeserved destiny, actually made films that were huge box-office successes. The first film which he made for Carl Laemmle, *Blind Husbands*, made nearly a million dollars profit. *The Merry Widow* cleared about four million dollars.

Comparative obscurity, however, does not lessen the perpetual interest that the advance-guard film circles have in von Stroheim. It is known that one of the heads of the Soviet film industry said to him: "You are to us in Russia what Moses was to the Israelites. We show your *Greed* to all our young directors."

Spasmodically voices are raised sometimes in protest at the treatment meted out to him.

And his future?

"Perhaps one day I will direct a picture again. In France or in England."

Was it rumoured that he would go to Russia to make films?

"Yes. Eisenstein tried to get me to go to Russia. It is a question of my family, though. I can't take any money out of Russia, and my family does not want to go. For myself, I would like to go."

The same impressive stance, the colour and gravitational power of a great personality. A click of the heels. A suggestion of a salute.

"Goodbye, Mr. von Stroheim."

"Goodbye."

To the observer it seems that like a very sensitive spirit he must needs live in the past, dreaming of those short-lived and almost violently stirring triumphs that made film history.

*Leslie Perkoff*

# Theatregoers—Good and Bad

## By JAMES BRIDIE

WE are told that the Theatre Audience is one thing and the Cinema Audience another; but everybody who can walk is the Cinema Audience, so the Theatre Audience is part of the Cinema Audience. It is a specialised part. Everybody knows how to look at photographs and it is, therefore, very easy to appreciate the conventions of moving photographs. When perception has become almost automatic, the mind is free to pick up something extra. That is why I was once astonished at a Glasgow cinema audience who were watching a pictorial story about a young law student who had fallen in love with a gypsy. He was so excited by this state that his work suffered and his mother had to speak to him very, very seriously. After a scene rivalling in honest emotion the Closet Scene in *Hamlet*, the boy said, "I am in a whirl. I gotta go outside and cool my brain." In a moment he was shown sitting down on a cold doorstep. There was a sudden, spontaneous, universal yell of laughter from the audience.

A theatre audience would not have reacted in that fashion unless it had been guying the play from the beginning. There would have been small outbursts here and there, silenced by indignant hushing from the majority who had not seen anything funny in the incident.

The conventions of the Theatre are more difficult than those of the Cinema. Audiences do not immediately accept them unless they are highly trained. They have to make a continuous effort of the imagination to hold on to their illusion. For example, they are seeing real people on the stage; but these people are framed in a gilt frame, they have painted faces, they are lit in a peculiar way, what they do after they leave the stage has to be constructed by the spectator out of his own imagination and a piece of obviously canvas backing representing a garden beyond a window doesn't do much to help him to visualise lawns, flowerbeds and terraces beyond and out of immediate sight. The cinema would show him the garden; and the people in it would be exactly like the people in his daily illustrated newspaper, animated by movement.

This necessity for effort in the theatre naturally divides audiences into classes. We have good, bad and indifferent audiences, quite sharply defined. In the cinema, they tend to a dead level. It also makes a stage play a more stimulating experience than a film play of the same quality. Mr. St. John Ervine, in the course of a not very well informed diatribe against the cinema, made one point when he said that playgoers came out of a theatre chattering and excited and cinemagoers emerged silent and with a jaded aspect.

BEFORE I carry the comparison further, I should like to examine the three classes of audience in the theatre.

Good and indifferent audiences may both be composed of intelligent people; or, to be exact, have sufficient intelligent people among them to leaven the damned lump. Different authorities have different views as to the proportion in which intelligence is distributed in any given audience. Some say that forty per cent have not the remotest idea what the antics within the illuminated rectangle are about. Others say eighty per cent. Most competent dramatists and producers bear this percentage in mind when they are making a play. They pepper their play at intervals with oaths, physical accidents, the spectacle of gay clothes and underclothes, jokes that the audience has heard at its mother's knee. Such jokes are "prepared" so that the audience can see them rolling down the hill. They are greeted with applause. The best example of the boiled chestnut known to me will be found in the last act of *What Every Woman Knows*, when the audience is cynically prepared to receive the injunction to the electorate to "Vote for Shand and damn the flowing tide." The passage is always met with tremendous laughter and hand-clapping.

When everything has been done to keep this extraordinary part of the audience interested, one still admires the courtesy and patience that keeps them in their seats throughout what must be, for them, a very dull business. For all this courtesy and patience, there are times when, incited by the example of the "indifferent" group, they get out of hand. They are then a bad audience. They eat, they whisper, they giggle, they explain to each other what they conceive to be the plot, they lose their heads when an animal comes on the stage, they breathe on the back of one's neck, they blow the fumes of shag or even proud cigars into the faces of ladies, they argue with programme sellers halfway through the first act, they bang seats and tread on corns and arrive, in the darkness, at the wrong place, they rustle papers, they upset teacups, they laugh rudely when an actor kisses an actress, they light matches to read their programmes, they shout in the foyers, they go to sleep, they get drunk, they cough, they display with pride their ignorance of the age-long customs of the theatre, of the art of drama, and of civilised manners. A popular success, no matter how good a play it may happen to be or how well produced and acted, will always attract, at some time or another, this horrifying mob.

The indifferent audience is the one in which "sophisticated" people abound. Now a Sophist, according to Aristotle, is a "pretender to knowledge, a man who employs what he knows to be fallacy for the purpose of deceit and of getting money." Sophistication is, according to the Dictionary, the act of adulterating or, alternatively, the art of quibbling. These adulterers and quibblers well deserve their adjective. The odd thing is that they are as proud of it as the mob theatregoers are of their brutish behaviour.

Be that as it may, they do not make a good audience. They are either wealthy or pretending to be wealthy and these occupations make a great and continuous call on the attention. Many a good play has gone cold and flat to a full house because these nasty exhibitionists have felt it their duty to be present.

A good audience is a splendid thing. It sits well forward on its seats. It is responsive, but it not only takes but gives. I have seen a hard-bitten actor reeling off the stage in tears, looking as Saul must have looked when he resumed his journey to Damascus, because the passion of a good audience had come across the footlights like a silent hurricane and taught him that his job of speaking another man's words was better than he thought it.

I HAVE hinted at a doubt whether the cinema can ever give a good audience what it deserves and what we should all like to give it. Two or three things it can do. It can make these people laugh; it can let them see common things with another man's eye; it can outline for them great issues. It can do these things at the same time as it is providing the mob with photographs of its loved ones. The good audience will not be content with weekly meals of sawdust, and it is a question whether it is worth the trouble of retaining it by putting a few valuables in the lucky dip. I think it is. The good audience is very solid, reliable and loyal. Suppose a counter-attraction to the cinema. Let us say huge beer gardens with a band and a strip-tease cabaret. If those days come the exhibitors will be glad of a bunch of adherents who will drag at least some of the silly sheep ever back to the fold.

As to the sophisticates, I hope I have made it plain that they are not a good audience and never will be. They write a good deal and some poor fellows of producers seem to read what they write. This is a great mistake.

# EDITORIAL

## *Films and the Nation*

THE proposals by which the British Government hope to encourage the growth of the native cinema during the next decade have been published. Both renters and exhibitors will be required to carry an increasing percentage of British made films. To prevent alien exploiters from meeting their legal obligations at the lowest possible cost by the production of dirt cheap, or "quickie" films, a minimum labour cost of seven thousand five hundred pounds must be expended on films which are to rank for Quota. These are the principal conditions. Except for the minimum cost clause and a preferential treatment of luxury films there is no fundamental change from the old Act under which the British cinema has careered to its present state of disaster.

Since the passing of the Cinematograph Act of 1927 we have seen one wave of swindle and mis-government succeed another. Public money has been subscribed in quantity for films which either failed to emerge or were so grossly mismanaged that a return on capital was from the first unlikely. The Government has looked blankly on, while foreign entrepreneurs in the production of quickie films over-drove our technicians and finally broke the spirit of men who might have done much for Britain on the screen. A wave of foreign invasion was permitted under the excuse of teaching our nationals though no attempt was made to see that this instruction of nationals was a real condition of employment. So long as the requisite amount of film footage was produced, no one cared under what conditions or in what quality production took place.

Much has been forgiven the British Board of Trade, and the Government behind it, on the ground that a body of experience had to be built up in a new and difficult field before effective administration was possible. But it was expected that ten years would be sufficient and that, in any further intervention, a real effort would be made to co-ordinate the industry and save the country from further scandal. The Board of Trade, it must be confessed, has again taken the lazy way out. There is nothing in the new proposals—perhaps purposely so—which second-rate clerks could not, by measuring rule, administer. No constructive control of conditions and qualities of production is envisaged.

The needs of the situation go beyond the commercial interests of any particular section of the film industry. In the ultimate the only interest that matters is the national interest and the encouragement of those creative elements in the film trade which are likely to serve that interest. On this fundamental ground three criticisms are offered on the Board of Trade's proposals. The first, made by Mr. Ostrer, is that no distinction is drawn between American pictures made in Britain and British pictures made in Britain and that, in fact, the sorry system of American controlled British production will persist. The second criticism is that the relatively high cost test of seven thousand five hundred pounds minimum on labour costs bears hardly on the independent producer and prevents initiative outside a few commercial rings. The third criticism is that by limiting the shorts Quota to five per cent no incentive is given to a field of production in which much useful national work and valuable creative apprenticeship is being carried on. These criticisms have plainly a single common denominator: a demand that the Government shall adopt a more constructive role and that it shall use its power to direct the development of a great national asset.

To all such criticisms the Board of Trade replies that an Advisory Committee will be set up to take care of exceptions. That Advisory Committee has, in the past, been drawn from majority interests in the film trade who, bound to the most hard-boiled traditions of commercialism, did not invariably represent either national or creative interests. This situation is to persist.

Is the Government to abandon the film industry to a further period of commercial anarchy? Or is it to seize the opportunity of bringing the industry into something like national focus? The Moyne Committee suggested the latter policy, and so have all reputable critics. We expect Parliament to agree with them.

***Every Reader can serve this paper and the progressive forces of the cinema by getting a new subscriber.***

## *Religious Film Schism*

THE announcement that Mr. Bruce Woolfe is to provide a series of religious film programmes marks the first step in what may become the most important development of the so-called 'non-theatrical' cinema. The churches have some fifty thousand halls which can be devoted to religious and social education by film. If even a proportion of these are so used they must become a new and vital force in articulating the public mind and a powerful complement to the influence of the commercial cinema.

Conflict is inevitable, however, between two parties in the counsels of the church. The first party regards the film as a medium through which their present somewhat unimaginative teaching of the Scriptures can be more widely spread. They hanker after films of the Gospel stories, without apparent concern for the virtue which must so often be lost when the highly polarised message of the Scriptures is transferred to powder and paint. There is also a tendency to choose stories which, while praising the more visible forms of worship and conversion, leave some considerable doubt as to the taste and quality of either.

The opposing school of thought, with whom Mr. Bruce Woolfe is by record and sympathy identified, is impressed by the value of cinema in community work and social education, and particularly in the service of youth. It points to the more startling possibility of making dramatic films of the world's greatest short stories and adding their spiritual message to the curriculum of religious experience. This is the real import of the announcement made by Mr. Bruce Woolfe, and Mr. Rank is to be congratulated on arranging so excellent a departure. The work of the Church will be enriched and it is assured in fiction of an inexhaustible source of inspiration.

From a more general point of view, it is important to note that finance is made available for film work which has been conceived from the first in spiritual terms. Ambitious young directors will not fail to avail themselves of so unique and brilliant an opportunity. They must be prepared, however, to fight a difficult battle, for the Peter and Paul school will feel they are getting less than their due if the message is not "direct." Religious film makers should arm themselves with the text of Matthew seven and twenty-one. The danger is that in much emphasis of the formal aspects of religion, goodness may easily fly out of the window. Goodness, we believe, includes good cinema.

## *In this Issue*

Cover still: Miriam Hopkins in *Woman Chases Man*


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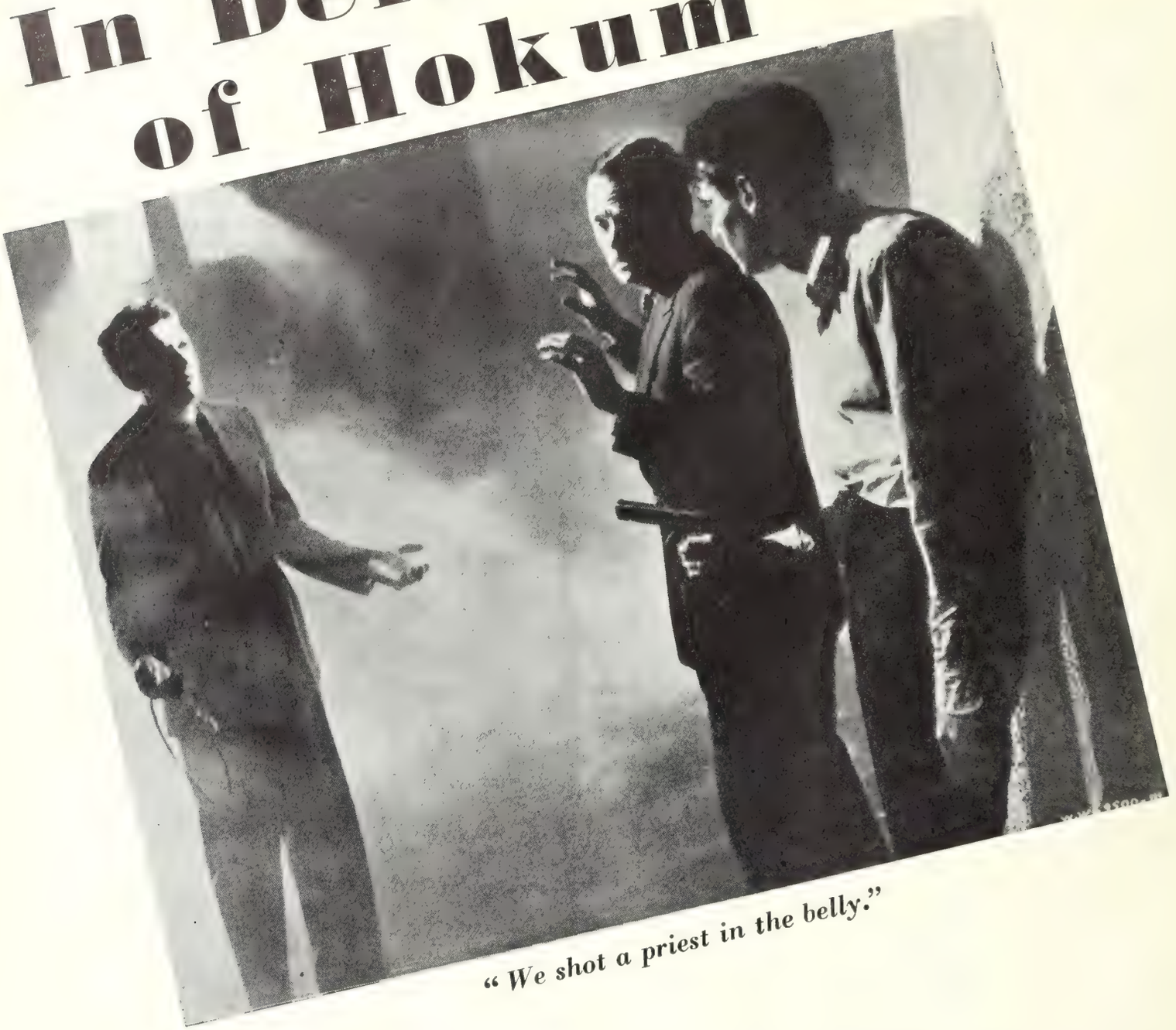
# In Defence of Hokum



*"We shot a priest in the belly."*

SPEAKING of hokum always reminds me of the town strumpet. And that always reminds me of Grandpa, because I stole the line from him. Grandpa had the right idea about hokum. "Hokum," he always used to say as he dangled me over his knee and read me Frank Merriwell, "is like the town strumpet. Nobody will admit knowing her; but nobody's not known her—if you will pardon the double negative."

What I'm trying to say is that no Hollywood writer will ever admit he injects the hokum hypodermic into his delicate brain babies. Yet should he fail to hop them up with a couple of pleasure bindles, they'd die of the dreaded Hollywood disease—Box-Office Anæmia.

Then he'd be forced to give up his self-filtering swimming pool with the cupids along the edge, those intellectual Sunday evenings at the Trocadero, necking his stenographer, his valley ranch with badminton court and rumpus room, and go back to writing punctuationless verse for the magazines.

I'll go still further. Were Hollywood suddenly to stop lushing up its assorted product with hokum, the producers would have to close the joint and turn it back to its original owners—the most shiftless, worthless tribe of Real Estate Indians that ever lived—who, I understand, don't want it anyway.

Rashly I shall attempt to prove all this. First, let me say I haven't the slightest idea what hokum is, except that I know circuses don't flop and "terrific," "stupendous," "colossal" still sell tickets. Aside from that, press me to the wall with a gun in my ribs, threaten to tear up my contract if I don't tell, and I'd say hokum was a deliberate attempt to assault an audience sitting helplessly and without defence with well known, time-tried theatrical devices that nauseate George Jean Nathan.

These include such items as the Chase, the Spectacle, Mother Love, the Heavy Father, the Boy and Girl, the Marines to the Rescue, the Gigantic Catastrophe. These and sundry other dramatic gadgets calculated to jog the nerves agreeably, rouse the flush of tears to the sentimental eye, titillate the well known animal sense, or in some way drench the sitter in inartistic glucosity. All with one of the writer's eyes on the box-office and the other on a second Duesenberg.

**Gene Towne, one-time cow-puncher and lumberjack, gagman and title-writer of the silent days, is now one of Hollywood's most colourful and prolific scenarists.**

**Part author of *The Case Against Mrs. Ames*, *History is Made at Night*, and *You Only Live Once*, he has just completed *Stand-in*, and *Ali Baba Goes to Town*.**

**In this article, published by courtesy of the American 'Stage,' Towne defends Hokum . . 'The brick of writing . . it is as necessary as the uninteresting foundations of a house . . the secret is to hide it.'**

★ ★ ★

WHICH brings to mind, for purposes of argument, the attitude of a certain cynical friend of mine who shall be nameless —Ted Shane. This harmless gentleman will pick up a phone book and say, "This wouldn't make a bad picture if you could only get a Boy and Girl in it!" Mr. Shane repeats this jape *ad nauseam* with Marx's *Das Kapital*, *Warren on Tumors*, and the *Social Register*.

Now funnily enough this is a most unfunny remark—because it's true. It is my certain belief that were some producer struck by the screen possibilities of these four peculiar and important works of literature he could and would make pictures of them.

Were the hokum he inserted in them excellent, he'd have excellent (successful) pictures. Fact is, I myself think they're great screen material. The stage has furnished more difficult things to adapt. There's even a way of lumping them all into one colossal that should do three weeks at the Music Hall:

"A social-registered Miss—the richest girl in the world, of course—has read Karl Marx but not understood him—as who does. Anxious to learn about the collapse of the muddleclass she decides to install a four-party line so she can listen in on three lower-class neighbours, picked at random from the phone book.

"A young phone company man arrives to install the phone. They fall in love with each other immediately but naturally fight like hell because she wants to rise to the level of the lower classes, and he wants to sink to the level of the upper classes. He wants to get out of the phone book into the *Social Register*.

"Naturally both families oppose the marriage—we'll get the reason later. Now I'm just thinking out loud—throw in an operation on the rich father's tumour, performed with the phone lad's emergency kit—everybody forgives everybody else. The picture plays six weeks at the Music Hall instead of three, and the trade papers run ads with quotes."

And if you don't think that'd make a great picture you're crazy. It has everything it takes —and you can always throw in a night club, a few musical numbers, and an earthquake to plug any of the story holes, if there are any.

When Romeo met Juliet Hollywood had its first brick laid and when they threw in a mother's tear and a big train wreck and discovered the night club, it was finally completed. Hokum is the brick of writing. It is as necessary as the dull, uninteresting foundations of a house. The secret is to hide it.

A decorator swishes a piece of taffeta, and fools you. A pastry chef uses different coloured icings—white frosting would taste just the same. A screen writer hops up his hokum bricks with hanky-panky and magoozlum that laughingly goes under the head of story treatment.

If I were to step into the office of my cultured and intelligent employer, Walter Wanger, and say, "Walter, I've got a great idea for a picture. It hasn't a night club in it, there are no dance numbers on a winding staircase, it is vacant of heart interest, boy fails to meet girl; in fact neither appears, et cetera, et cetera"—the good man would throw me out.

In other words, producers are forced to make pictures for a man who lives with his wife and eight kids in one room over a garage and goes to the movies on relief money. Show a guy like that something about the problems of his own fate and he'll spend your tax money on a new Packard. And justifiably so.

Hokum is only as successful as a magician's unknown trick. He mystifies you while he hacks the woman in half, or deals you a pat flush from a deck of cards securely wrapped in cellophane and bearing the label on the reverse side, "American Novelties, Inc."

But once this guy lets you in on the secret he's as dead as the *Police Gazette*. Maybe that answers the question the little man in the back row just put to me as to what kind of hokum audiences want these days. I'd say offhand the kind that gives them a quick ticket out of reality.

They want to get away from communism, fascism, sudden Sunday death, overdrawn accounts, and radio commercials. That's why they swarm into the cinema cathedral and wallow in incredibility. They want to identify themselves with the people on the screen.

NOT that I'm a guy who wants to leave for Shangri-La, now or ever. I hate the place myself. I know I'd be bored to death there. There'd be no movie houses. But if seven hundred million people seek Shangri-La via the hushed interior of the local Roxy who am I to oppose them—and with what?

What I am for is bigger and better hokum. Like last year's hat, hokum ages the day after to-morrow—but you can rip off the crown, stick on a bunch of carrots or an eagle, and get something brand new. For instance if the marines get laughable and burlesquey by arriving as marines they can always come as bolsheviks to the rescue of the beleaguered peasant or didn't you see *We from Kronstadt*, which also tossed in a sneering heavy, a Flagg-Quirt set-up, and a beautiful Russian Crawford who planted geraniums in No Man's Land.

As for the Boy-and-Girl thing, this happens to be a sentimental age that wants its movie boys to get their movie girls after the proper amount of quarrelling. Another age may grow anti-sentimental and demand that Boy Loses Girl after a certain amount of loving.

As for myself, I have been guilty of hokum over and over again. In fact, I like it so much I have a collaborator, Graham Baker, to help me double the output. Meanwhile I pray the Lord every night to strengthen my hokum, because I know when it gets rotten eggy I'm through, and that goes for all guys with pens east or west of the Mississippi. I hate to admit it, but in *You Only Live Once*, Graham Baker and I were guilty of the most flagrant hoke. We shot a priest in the belly. The critics raved about it, nobody has asked me why Baker and I didn't see fit to shoot the warden, who would have been the more logical target—so I'm beginning to put it down to high art.

Some day, of course, it will be different. The movie audience will have become a man, demand sterner stuff and ask to be led out of Shangri-La into reality. In the meantime, Old Man Hokum, freshened up with rouge and lipstick, streamlined and chromiumed, just goes rolling along. It's still getting the laughs and tears which audiences have always been suckers for—even as you and I.

# Snow-white and the Seven Dwarfs

Generations of children have delighted in the stories of Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm. These stories, based on traditional folk-tales of the Rhine Province, remain unrivalled as a source of amusement to the young.

From amongst these old familiar friends of fairyland, Walt Disney has chosen a universally acknowledged favourite, *Snow-white and the Seven Dwarfs,* for his first full-length feature film.

In the Disney adaptation, which has cost over £200,000 and taken nearly two years to make, the seven dwarfs, unnamed in the original story, emerge with names and characters. Amongst the seven are: Doc, "a nervous little guy," says Disney, "self-styled leader but floundering when decision is needed"; Happy, "a fat cheery fellow, but dumb"; Sleepy, "dozing plenty but saying little, though strangely to the point when he does speak"; and Grumpy, "the real leader, always grousing, but with a heart of gold."

We present the original story assured that it will be an amusing and acceptable introduction to the film.

ONCE, in the middle of winter, when the flakes of snow were falling down like feathers, a queen sat working by a window, which had an ebony frame. While sewing, and looking every moment at the falling snow, she pricked her finger, and three drops of blood fell on it. She thought the red colour looked so pretty on the white snow, that she exclaimed, "Ah! if I had only a dear little child, as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as ebony." Very soon after this she really had a little daughter, who was as white as snow, for she was fair, as red as blood, for her cheeks were so rosy, and as black as ebony, for her hair and eyes were black, and she was called little Snow-white; but when the child was born the queen died.

After a year the king took another consort. She was a handsome woman, but very proud and ambitious, and could not endure that any one should exceed her in beauty. She had a magical glass in which she regarded herself, and when she stood before it and said—

"Mirror, tell me, can you see
Any that may compare with me?"

The glass replied—

"Beautiful queen, you are the loveliest in the land!"

Snow-white, however, grew up more beautiful every day, and when she was seven years old was more lovely than the queen herself. One day, when the latter stood before her glass and asked—

"Mirror, tell me, can you see
Any that may compare with me?"

The glass replied—

"You were the handsomest queen of old,
But Snow-white is lovelier, a thousandfold!"

This frightened the queen, and she turned pale with envy, and henceforward, every time she encountered Snow-white she felt her heart turn against her, so that she hated her more and more, for envy and pride grew like weeds in her mind, and she had no peace day or night. At last she could bear it no longer, but calling a huntsman, she said to him, "Take that child into the wood, let me not behold her more; you must kill her, and, as a sign that I am obeyed, bring me her heart and liver." The man did as he was ordered, conveyed the child into the wood, and had drawn his hunting-knife to kill her, when poor Snow-white began to weep, and entreated most pathetically that he would spare her life. "Good huntsman," said she, "grant me my life, I will live henceforth in the wild wood,and never return home." The huntsman's heart was touched, and he said, "Go, poor child," for he thought to himself, the wild beasts will have devoured her ere long, and he felt much relieved that he had resolved not to kill her himself. A young fawn springing by, he killed it, and carried its heart and liver to the queen, who caused it to be salted and then cooked, imagining, while eating it, that it was little Snow-white's liver and heart.

The poor child was now entirely alone in the wood, and soon became so frightened that she was quite bewildered. She ran over sharp stones, and through thorn bushes, and wild animals rushed past her, but they did her no harm. She ran as far as her legs would carry her, and when evening came on she saw a small house, which she entered in order to rest herself.

In this house everything was small, but so pretty and clean that it can hardly be described. There stood a little table, covered with a white cloth, and upon it seven little plates, each plate having its little spoon, fork, and little drinking cup. Against the wall were seven little beds, placed near each other, with snow white curtains. Poor Snow-white was so hungry and thirsty, that she first ate a small portion of bread and vegetable from each plate, and then drank from each cup a sip of wine, because she did not like to empty one plate and one cup altogether, and then was so tired that she laid herself in one of the little beds, but she tried them all before she found one she liked—one was too short, another too long. However, the seventh suited her exactly, and she covered herself up, said her prayers, and fell asleep.

When it was quite dark the masters of the pretty little house came home. They were seven dwarfs, who dug and sought in the mountains for copper. They lighted their seven little candles, and it now being very light in the little house, they discovered that somebody had been there, things not being in the state in which they had left them.

The first said, "Who has been sitting upon my chair?" the second, "Who has been eating out of my plate?" the third, "Who has been eating my bread?" the fourth, "Who has been eating my vegetables?" the fifth, "Who has been drinking out of my cup?" the sixth, "Who has been cutting with my knife?" and the seventh, "Who has been eating with my fork?"

The first now looked around, and saw a little hollow in his bed, so he said, "Who has been lying on my bed?" the others came also to examine, and every one said, "Who has been lying on my bed?" but the seventh discovered little Snow-white in his, for she was lying there asleep. So he called the others, and they all came running with their candles. "Oh!" exclaimed all, "what a beautiful child!" They were delighted at the sight, and would not allow her to be awakened, but let her remain all night where she was. The seventh dwarf was obliged to sleep with his comrades, one hour with each, and so the night passed away.

WHEN it was morning, Snow-white awoke, and was much alarmed upon seeing the seven dwarfs. However, they were very kind, and said, "Child, what is your name?" "My name is Snow-white," answered she. "How came you in our house?" continued the dwarfs. She then related how her stepmother designed to have her killed, but the huntsman had spared her life, and how she had afterwards walked the whole day, until she reached the cottage. The dwarfs said, in reply, "Will you attend to our housekeeping for us? Cook, make beds, wash, sew, and knit? If you like to do all this for us, and keep everything in order for us, you may remain, and shall want for nothing." "With all my heart," replied the child, and stayed accordingly, keeping all in excellent order.

The dwarfs went every morning to the mountains, to find copper and gold, and came home in the evening, when they expected their supper ready. The maiden was all day long alone, so the kind dwarfs warned her, saying, "Beware of the stepmother! she will shortly discover that you are here, so let nobody in."

The queen, after eating as she supposed Snow-white's liver and heart, thought she must now again be the most beautiful, and, advancing to her glass, asked—

"Mirror, tell me, can you see
Any that may compare with me?"

The looking-glass replied—

"Oh, queen, your face is fair!
But you cannot compare
With her they call Snow-white; a child
Who lives with the dwarfs, across the mountains wild."

This astonished her, for the glass, she was well aware, did not deceive; so she concluded that the huntsman had deceived her, and that Snow-white still lived. She thought, and thought anew, how she should destroy her, for so long as she was not the loveliest in the land, her envy left her no rest. Having at length decided upon a plan, she coloured her complexion, and dressed herself like an old woman having wares to sell, and was not to be recognised. In this mode she went over the seven mountains to the place where the seven dwarfs dwelt, knocked at the door, and cried, "Beautiful things, cheap!" Snow-white peeped through the window, and said, "Good-day, good woman; what have you to sell?" "Laces, of all kinds and colours," she said, displaying one made of variegated silk. "I may surely let the honest woman enter," thought Snow-white; so she unbolted the door, and bought the beautiful lace for her bodice. "Child," said the woman, "how ill-dressed you look! come, for once, I will lace your bodice as it ought to be done." Snow-white, having no suspicion, stood before her, and allowed her to do it for her; but the pretended old woman laced so quickly and tight, that the child lost her breath, and fell to the ground as if dead. "Are you the fairest now, I wonder?" said the wicked woman, hastening home.

Not long afterwards, it being evening, the seven dwarfs came home; but how were they horrified to see their dear little Snow-white lying on the ground, motionless, and breathless, as if dead. They raised her, and observing that her bodice was too tightly laced, they cut the fatal lace that had caused

Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm, from drawings by Ludwig Grimm

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# Snow-white and the Seven Dwarfs

(*Continued from page* 9).

the mischief, upon which she began to breathe, and at length gradually revived. When the dwarfs heard what had taken place, they said, "The old woman was no other than the wicked queen; take care of yourself, and let nobody enter, when we are not at home." But the bad woman, in the meantime, had returned to the palace, and approaching the looking-glass, addressed to it the favourite inquiry—

"Mirror, tell me, can you see
Any that may compare with me?"

To which, as before, the glass replied to the queen—

"Ah, queen, your face is fair!
But you cannot compare
With her they call Snow-white; a child
Who dwells with the dwarfs, across the mountains wild."

When she heard these words, her blood ran cold, for she thought she had effectually disposed of the child. "It must be done, however," she said; "and this time I will spare no pains." Accordingly she, by magic art, prepared a comb of the most destructive quality, and disguising herself, took the form of another old woman. She crossed the seven hills, and coming to the house, knocked at the door, crying, "Buy my pretty wares, cheap!" Snow-white looked out, and said, "Go on; I may not let anybody in." "You may, however, look," said the woman, holding up the poisoned comb for her inspection, which pleased the child so well, that she allowed herself to be persuaded, and the door was opened.

When the purchase was made, the old woman said, "Let me comb your hair nicely for you"; and poor Snow-white, thinking no harm, permitted her to do so: but scarcely had the comb touched the hair, than the poison took effect, and the maiden fell senseless to the ground. "You miracle of beauty!" said the wicked woman, scornfully, "your reign is over," and hastened away.

Fortunately, evening was at hand, and the seven dwarfs were soon at home: directly they saw Snow-white lying on the ground,their suspicions fell upon the stepmother; they examined her carefully, and discovering the poisoned comb, drew it from her hair. Scarcely had they done so, than the maiden revived, and related all that had happened to her. Again they warned her against her stepmother, and showed her the consequence of neglecting to follow their advice, which she promised to observe for the future.

Directly the queen reached home, she hastened to reap, as she thought, the fruit of her success; and addressing the glass, said—

"Mirror, tell me, can you see
Any that can compare with me?"

The reply was the same as before—

"Oh, queen, your face is fair?
But you cannot compare
With her they call Snow-white; a child
Who lives with the dwarfs, across the mountains wild."

Her rage at receiving this answer passed all bounds. "If it costs me my own life, Snow-white shall die," said she, at length. Then shutting herself up in a secret chamber, she composed of all kinds of poisonous charms, an apple, fair to look at, but death to swallow. It was so beautiful, that every one who saw it, must desire to eat; but the first morsel would prove fatal. When this was done, she took the habit of a peasant, and crossing the seven hills, came to the dwarfs' house. She knocked, and Snow-white put her head out of the window, saying, "I may not admit anybody, the seven dwarfs have forbidden me." "Very well," returned the woman; "I shall soon get rid of my apples somewhere else. There, I will give one to you." "Thank you," said Snow-white; "I may not take it." "Are you afraid of poison?" said the peasant; "see, I will cut the apple in half, and give you the rosy part; the other I will eat myself." The apple was so artfully made, that the red alone was poisonous; and Snow-white was so caught by its beautiful appearance, that seeing the peasant eat a portion, she thought there could be no harm in it, stretched forth her hand, and took it from the woman.

The instant, however, that a morsel reached her mouth, she fell dead to the ground. The queen stood for a moment contemplating the success of her stratagem; then saying, "White as snow, red as blood, black as ebony! this time the dwarfs can do nothing for you," she departed. Her first act was to go to the glass, and she said—

"Mirror, tell me, can you see
Any that may compare with me?"

The answer was—

"Oh, queen, you are the loveliest in the land!"

Now, for the first time her wicked heart felt peace, that is to say, as much as such a wicked heart could.

The little dwarfs returned home the same evening, and found Snow-white lying on the ground, incapable of breathing, and dead. They raised her, tried all possible means to discover the cause of her death, combed her hair, unlaced her bodice, washed her with wine and water, in short, although satisfied that in some way the stepmother was the cause of the disaster, they could not discover how, and the dear child was dead, and remained so. They laid her upon a bier, and all seven sat around, bewailing her for three days. They then thought of burying her, but she looked so fresh and like a living creature, and her cheeks were so red, that they said, "We cannot commit her to the earth." So they had a transparent coffin made of glass, placed her within, and caused her name to be written outside, and that she was a king's daughter. The coffin was kept upon the mountain, and one of the dwarfs was always by, to watch it. The animals also came to lament for Snow-white; first an owl, then a raven, and afterwards a pigeon.

Snow-white had now lain for some considerable time in the coffin on the mountain, yet she only looked as if she were sleeping, for she was still as white as snow, as red as blood and as black as ebony.

It happened that a king's son lost his way in the wood, and came to the dwarfs' house to pass the night; he had seen the coffin on the mountain, with lovely Snow-white lying in it, and had read the golden letters thereon. He therefore said to the dwarfs, "Let me have the coffin; I will give you whatever you like to ask for it." The dwarfs, however, replied that they would not part with it for all the gold in the world. "Give it to me, then," said the prince, "for I cannot live without seeing Snow-white; I will value and honour her above all I hold dear."

When he spoke thus, the good little dwarfs felt pity for him, and gave him the coffin; and the prince ordered his servants immediately to raise it on their shoulders, and bear it away. In doing this, it happened that they stumbled over a branch lying on the ground, and the jerk caused the poisonous morsels of apple, which Snow-white had taken into her mouth, to return from her throat, for they had not been swallowed.

Not long after, she opened her eyes, raised the lid of the coffin, sat up, and was much surprised when she found herself moving on some men's shoulders. "Where am I?" she exclaimed. "With me!" said the prince; and he began to relate to her all that had happened, adding, "I love you more than anything else in the world; come to my father's palace, and you shall be my bride." Snow-white consented, accompanied him thither, and the marriage took place with much pomp.

Snow-white's wicked stepmother was, however, invited to the wedding, and having put on the splendid robe she had had made for the occasion, she stood before the glass, and said—

"Mirror, tell me, can you see
Any that can compare with me?"

The glass replied immediately—

"Till now you were the fairest queen,
But now a lovelier may be seen!"

The wicked queen uttered a terrible imprecation against her rival, and was much disturbed at the intelligence conveyed by her faithful glass. At first, she determined not to go to the marriage; but she had no rest, and felt compelled to go in order to see the young queen.

Upon entering, she saw Snow-white, and fear and astonishment deprived her of the power of stirring from the spot, for she was the last person she expected to see. In the meantime her punishment had been prepared; iron slippers were made red-hot in a furnace, and when ready were taken out with tongs and placed before the queen. She was then compelled to put her feet into them, and dance until she fell dead, and all present felt so much detestation of her wickedness, that there were none to pity her.

# YOU CAN'T KID THE CAMERA

## says Robert Donat. A further extract from Donat's excellent article in 'Footnotes to the Film'

OF this I am quite certain. I am a better actor for my film experience. Two qualities —concentration and sincerity—are even more necessary on the screen than on the stage, and one's work cannot fail to be the richer for their exercise. An American guest—of whom we should be so proud that nothing should ever be permitted to tempt her out of England—recently appeared in the West End of London in a play somewhat miscalled a melodrama. I refer to Miss Constance Cummings. Originally a stage actress, she gained a certain screen reputation and is married to a famous English playwright. It is one of the hopes of our Theatre that Benn Levy will keep her supplied with plays worthy of her rare and exciting abilities. In *Young Madame Conti* Miss Cummings gave a performance made immeasurably superior by her camera experience; so much so, that no young stage actress devoid of film experience could hope to touch it.

Your stage producer rarely directs from the front row of the stalls: once the play reaches the stage and the curtain is up, you will find him either at the back of the stalls or in the dress circle. The farther rehearsals proceed, the farther away from his actors he tends to get. Filming employs almost the reverse methods. A scene is shot first in long-shot—then medium, then close-up. The film director tends to approach, the stage director to retreat from, the actors. But that is not the only difference. Having been manoeuvred practically under the skin of the actors, the camera takes the scene in miniature and later enlarges that miniature. (In this process certain changes occur, but they are not of great importance. For instance, the play of light, cunningly screened and filtered, may transform a made-up face so that film actors' mothers have been known to pay twice before recognising their own progeny. Since we are pursuing comparisons, the theatre has its illusions too, and many of them are shattered at the stage door.)

In the theatre it is the audience which receives; in the studio it is the camera, with this surprising difference—that whereas one can get away with flippancy, sloppiness and insincerity in the theatre, infinite care must be exercised in front of the camera. In the theatre the broad methods necessary to reach topmost galleryite and lowermost pittite sometimes cover a multitude of sins.

Much has been said about the theatre's living response in its audience, but little truth has been spoken. There is nothing to equal the electric give-and-take of a full house, but it is false to describe an audience's reaction as "subtle." All mass reaction is collective; its emotions are simple, sometimes crude and often based on hysteria. It is an undeniable stimulus but no more potent than the creative stimulus of actual endeavour. I am certain that my best work has been given either in my own study or at rehearsals where there was no audience at all. The camera, if uncompromisingly critical, is at least unemotional and does not flatter.

With the searching eye of the camera so close upon one, how can one dare to be other than truthful? To say that the average film demands the minimum of veracity is simply a criticism of the average film and no indictment of film acting in itself. Because we are accustomed to seeing displays of pygmy emotion and magazine-story intellect, must we assume that cinematic art has nothing more to offer? Literature is not judged by the penny dreadful.

It is one of the paradoxes of the Cinema that while it is supposed to succeed principally with mass effects it is actually at its best when it handles the little things, the seemingly unimportant. On the screen an apparent triviality can achieve as much pure drama as many a big effect which thrilled its way across the Lyceum footlights in its most theatrical days. Remember our limitations, dear reader. A flicker of doubt in the eyes on the stage is meaningless except to the first few rows of stalls. Contemptuous critics label the filmic process as "simply the real thing photographed." What a compliment—if a veiled one. Let us examine this reality for a moment, and if we bear in mind that technique is needed every bit as much for the overcoming of difficulties as for the actual exercise of the art itself, it may be amusing to recite a few of them.

On the screen, suppose we see a modern young man dangling a leg over a modern office desk with modern New York receding in the background. Suddenly we come closer to him. In other words, the camera moves into close-up. His eyes flash a look of doubt, and that is all. I have purposely chosen something elementary. That flicker of doubt is created in a blaze of light in a dreadful fug under the very nose of that terrifying taskmaster, the camera lens, with a "mike" on a boom hovering overhead, surrounded by the gang of electricians and props boys and faced by the unit staff headed by the director—who is expecting results. Behind him are the plaster walls and an unglazed window with an enlarged black-and-white picture-postcard of New York propped up behind it; above him and everywhere else, lights.

In actual fact, the young man's behind is probably propped up on a couple of cushions or books and the desk raised up on wood blocks to improve matters for the camera, so that his leg dangles at a very unnatural height from the ground, and he must gauge

his movements so that at the moment of the close-up, his head will be momentarily still and his eyes—almost imperceptible—will flash their story; not into the lens itself (for the lens, though our most inquisitive neighbour, must be ignored completely if we would win it over completely), not precisely into the lens, then, but at a spot dangerously close. And an exact spot; remember, he is to convey a flicker of doubt—not a flicker of doubt as to where he should look, and so insidiously faithful is the lens that it will blurt out the whole story if given half a chance: "Damn! I'm looking into the lens." "Hell! I looked too low!"

But it is when one sits in the projection theatre at the studio the following day and sees one's previous day's efforts come to life, that the real strength of a mere moment becomes properly significant. Then, when one senses the value of detail and the unique opportunities afforded for perfection, the ultimate possibilities of film-making seem to gain a sort of sanctity. One leaves the stuffy little theatre mellowed and humbled but determined to aim high.

IMAGINE that I find myself faced with the problem of playing on the screen a part I have already played on the stage. Ideally, this could never exist—a stage play belonging emphatically to the theatre. Here we have the slavish imitations of the film world, the wholesale pinching of ideas. "Dearth of Stories" is simply an admission of the lack of creative talent in film studios, talent which, if worthy of its own medium, should conceive, plan and produce exclusively in filmic terms. The so-called "adaptation," which, at its best done lovingly with a respect for the original, sends one back longingly to the bookshelf, and at its worst makes one ask whatever gods there be why a good story known and beloved by thousands should be twisted, distorted and disembowelled. Like a recent case I have only too much cause to remember, in which the prologue, epilogue and main theme of a novel were ruthlessly dismembered to make a glamorous holiday; this in itself was lamentable and stupid enough, but the author's slavish submission to such atrocities, and his praise, spoken in my presence, of the butchery, are quite unforgivable. Really, something must be done to protect authors from themselves.

For the sake of investigating the comparison, I will attempt it: James Bridie at last consents to the filming of *A Sleeping Clergyman*. Let me pause to warn you that if ever this does happen it will be neither "freely adapted from" nor "based on" the original; it will follow Bridie's scheme or perish in the attempt. The moment I will choose is the great one in the First Act where the pregnant sweetheart of Cameron the First deliberately smashes his culture tubes. For those so unfortunate as to miss this superb drama, I will explain that Cameron the First anticipated Pasteur's germ theory of disease, and these culture tubes meant so much to him that rather than be separated from them or in any way be hindered in his work he turned a deaf ear to the friends who offered him comparative luxury, sea air and the ravishing proximity of his mistress, and stuck to his combined discomforts in a Glasgow attic. Cameron, who is already half out of bed, seething with fury at the girl's taunts, cries out as she backs away from him into a collision with the table on which his experimental culture tubes repose in their rack. Seeing the mingled horror and love in his eyes—the love which she is denied—she deliberately turns and sweeps them to the floor.

NOW so far I have played the purist, rendering unto the Cinema the things which are the Cinema's—and denying any co-operative truck with the Theatre. But I must confess it is a very fascinating comparison, because I have just discovered that the idea which dominated the scene in the reading, but did not dominate in the Theatre, could easily dominate on the screen—the decision being in the scenarist's hands. Which do you wish to predominate, Mr. Bridie? The germ theory symbolised by the culture tubes, Cameron's inherent badness, or Cameron's inherent genius? (I haven't forgotten the girl, who, good as her chances are, really carried the baby in more senses than one.) In the reading, the germ theory won the day; in the theatre, Cameron's desperate race against death and his desperate ill-treatment of the girl.

Bridie, who knows the taste and smell of his theatrical onions about as well as anyone writing in the Theatre to-day, realising that his little rack of test tubes would be an almost negligible part of the stage setting, built up an edifice of words. Many of these, Mr. Bridie, will have to go from our scenario because they will be superfluous. Alternatively, Mr. Donat, you will have to sacrifice some of your high-lights too, because those test tubes are going to be given a good deal of footage. Close-up after close-up will plant and re-plant them. Finally, a huge one, as the girl smashes them to the floor, then one of the table, and the awful emptiness where they had been. These things will intensify the drama culminating in Cameron's tragic eagerness to outlive his dream, his bitter hatred of the things that thwart him, his awful agony when he sees his dream destroyed, and his final uncontrollable suicidal rage; intensify it even more than Bridie's theatrical devices built them up for me on the stage. But the camera will now demand the greatest responsibility ever asked of an artist—absolute honesty and integrity. When that relentless eye goggles at us in close-up we may be sure of one thing—we must deliver up to it the finest work of which we are capable; nothing but the truth will do.

AND is not that the sum total of any claim we may make for the films? For what does it amount to when all is said and done? Just this: an instrument as subtle, as plastic, as creative and inspired as the technicians we put behind it and actors we put in front of it. No more; no less.

For the future, it is for the writer, the producer, the director, the technician and the actor to dare to have a conscience, and for the public to discover its own intelligence.

Somewhere above I have hinted that the film actor's most important asset is the eye. Didn't somebody once say that the eye is the window of the soul?

**"Surrounded by technicians and extras"—*Knight Without Armour*, in production**

# "BLAST THE NAVY!

## *Stick to the Shop, Boys, Stick to the SHOP!"*

It is not improbable that, more than any other corporation of men, the Royal Navy has suffered at the hands of the cinema. For much longer than one cares to remember have its officers and men and their ships been made silly to serve the almighty Box-Office. There has been a surfeit of comic admirals with seductively unseduceable daughters, of Hentyish officers and low comedy men. Fortunately the ships themselves have retained much of their dignity; even the very smartest men about Wardour Street are up against something in the case of thirty or forty thousand tons of steel. Though they may rust, ferrous metals are not easily made febrile.

But in *Our Island Nation*—an E.G.S. production in six reels—the Navy does not suffer in this old fashioned way. Up to a point the film is valid and magnificent, and *never*, I consider, have there hitherto been assembled such thousands of feet of good downright documentary film of ships' companies at work and of august photography of their ships at sea. Because of "the close and continuous co-operation of the Admiralty in the production of this film"—to quote E.G.S.—"the unit of ten cameramen worked in ships, aircraft and aircraft carriers of the Home and Mediterranean Fleets during the combined manœuvres in the Atlantic last March, and at Gibraltar and Malta and in the Mediterranean during January, February and March." Greater facilities indeed could hardly have been afforded.

There are sequences of admirable shots illustrating aspects of the routine on board a battleship on an ordinary day in harbour—the keeping of the ship and her armament clean; the training of young seamen; the work of boats' crews; minor refitting work on machinery; the Royal Marines at small arm drill, and all the rest of it; also recreational activities on board and ashore after working hours.

All this is informative and in every way good in the documentary tradition. But of course it is when the ships are at sea that we get the high lights. Ships gliding out of the Grand Harbour at Malta at dawn, with the mists smoking about the looming fortress walls; battleships wallowing and plunging in a seaway—shot after shot superbly taken; the nine great 16-inch guns of *Nelson* or *Rodney*, all within the frame, firing their salvoes and, between them, for re-loading, swinging like chorus girls' legs; the javelin-like destroyers weaving their lovely patterns against turbulent sea and sky; an aircraft attack on the fleet and the impression of the terrific repelling force of the multiple pom-poms; and a *tremendous* shot—taken broadside on—of a *Queen Elizabeth* class battleship shoving her bows into a big head sea as if she were pretending to be a submarine. If God ever answers cameramen's prayers then on that occasion he very certainly handed it to Raymond Elton on a salver. And, indeed, throughout the naval shots of the film, one takes one's hat off to those cameramen. What they must have had to put up with, one way and another, is just no armchair critic's business.

Admitting that the film in effect is propaganda for the Navy, the angle of presentation of the main theme—that the job of the Fleet, the work of all these officers and men in their steel ships, is to ensure their country's food supply—is impeccable. Democratically it is pleasing that the hero—the human symbol of their devotion to duty—is not an officer but a rating; a chief yeoman of signals. Yes, up to a point—a high point—the film is valid and, in parts, magnificent.

But what?

There is our old college chum—that fetish for fiction at any cost. We are unconcerned here with whose fault that may be—we merely take note of it as a plain symptomatic fact. The Great Big Box-Office Bogey Who Lives In A Great Big Wood In Wardour Street must be propitiated. So even the august majesty of the Fleet must toe the line. Thus, superimposed upon its tremendous sea-strewn activities, upon that valid documentary and that august beauty of great ships at sea, is this Story.

The hero, the chief yeoman of signals,

# "Our Island Nation" the new E.G.S. production reviewed by Commander Campbell Lithgow, R.N. (Ret'd.). We warn our readers that, as befits an old Sea-Dog, the Commander's language is not always that of the higher criticism.

whose ship is due to sail in forty-eight hours, receives a telegram from his sister saying that her husband is "critical." He is granted special leave for twenty-four hours and goes to her—to find that her husband, a crippled grocer, is in a cantankerous mood. Customers come into his shop and complain that his prices are too high, and he puts the blame not on economic causes but on the Navy which costs the taxpayer so much. So, very obligingly, the chief yeoman dedicates his special leave to justifying the Fleet to the grocer explaining to him that it ensures his supply of commodities. Also the grocer has two sons, who have ideas about "going to sea," which the grocer thinks is a Bad Thing, but which the chief yeoman thinks is a Good Thing.

The part of the hero is played by Stanley Holloway, but do not therefore be dismayed. Young Albert is not cast as a midshipman, nor Laurel and Hardy as rival Commanders-in-Chief—nor the Marx Brothers as their Lordships. The producers know where to draw the line. And Stanley Holloway is good: he looks the part and plays it with sturdiness and gusto, and his comments are informative and salty. He is miles away from comic north country monologues.

In effect the grocer's shop becomes a grandstand, for the benefit of the occupants of which the rival fleets do their stuff, with the chief yeoman as commentator. A Red (British) fleet, based at Gibraltar, saves a food convoy from a marauding Blue (Enemy) fleet working from Malta: a set piece for the benefit of the grocer.

There is also an abortive attempt to supplement Stanley Holloway's commentary by the introduction of a naval officer and model ships in the presence of an enquiring civilian, but abortion is so prompt that gestation can hardly be said to have taken place at all. But there is no sort of abortion of the shop. Oh, dear no. The producers are very fond mothers of that. Indeed, throughout the film—breaking down its continuity, validity and beauty—we are continually being dragged back there. It is virtually as if the director were continually bawling through a megaphone, "Blast the navy—stick to the shop, boys, stick to the shop!" This fixation is remarkable. The fleets may be knocking seven varieties of highly coloured hell out of one another, but they have to put them all on the ice when a hick comes in to ask the price of a pound of cheese. And the film ends—by Fitzpatrick out of Chaplin—with the grocer's two boys, complete with ambiguous-looking bundles, trudging along a country road into The Distance—and, perhaps, to The Sea. And so we say farewell—at any rate to that bloody shop.

But it would be ungracious, and perhaps unfair, any further to stress the shortcomings of *Our Island Nation*. Indeed, it is only because the Royal Navy does stand so high in the hearts of almost all of us—and particularly of those who have served in it—that one is censorious. E.G.S. have, after all, shown us no little splendour, and it would be churlish not to be very grateful for it. Their enterprise and their resource in the face of many difficulties are most certainly to be commended. Ancient history it is for a ship to be spoiled for a hap'orth of tar; contemporary history for a man-of-war and her people to be be-sugared for the making of musical comedy fudge; and though, perhaps, it is a somewhat formidable innovation for the majesty of The Fleet thus to be subverted for a puppet show for one cantankerous grocer, The Fleet is The Fleet for all that.

After all, too, our island nation is a nation of shopkeepers, and so The Fleet but a shopkeepers' fleet, and though to some ways of thinking, it might have been in better taste not quite so crudely to have stressed the fact, it is unquestionable that presentation of such Facts of Life is fashionable—and, to some extent, popular—and so the faults of the film are due, presumably, not so much to E.G.S., but to that Big Bad Bogey. And, *Beautifully*, does this film serve to reveal just what a cretin *He* really is. Hundreds of thousands of tons of exquisitely wrought steel here condescend to prove it to you.

# THE PARIS EXHIBITION

# The Mode of the Moment

## —at Le Pavillon d'Elégance

by

MARION DORN

On Sundays, the Paris Exhibition has the feeling of the Midi en fête. One is sucked through the Trocadero Gate with a great crowd as through a funnel, on to the wide terrace, and as you pause to catch your breath, you have a vision of fountains, trees, great tomb-like structures and many large, glass-walled lavatories and laundries and hat-boxes, and of a great, good-natured excited crowd.

No chic Parisians, no neat Americans—just crowds and crowds of country people with baskets and bottles and all of the children. These people see everything. Their feet may ache and the children may get drugged or peevish with fatigue—but they get their money's worth and they don't miss a thing.

Le Pavillon d'Elégance is an ineffective structure in the shape of a hangar, on the Left Bank. It is painted pale blue and has a surface decoration of criss-crossed white ropes some of which are already loose and hanging. Or perhaps they haven't been put in place yet. Nothing seems quite finished except Russia and Germany. The horizontal show window is lined with a real straw background, reminding one once again of the "nostalgie d'Afrique" of the chic and rich. On the straw is a rough white plaster bow, its ribbons clumsily undulating over the whole length and inscribed with the names of all the great couturiers of France. The window is only about 3 feet deep and is filled with coarse dirt and stones. One rather imagines that exotic plants and flowers will eventually fill this space, because in one corner is a carefully arranged group consisting of an old garden rake on which hangs a worn coat—and a shapeless but very human and worn pair of shoes stand below it with a neatly folded piece of brown paper, the string carefully wound around and saved.

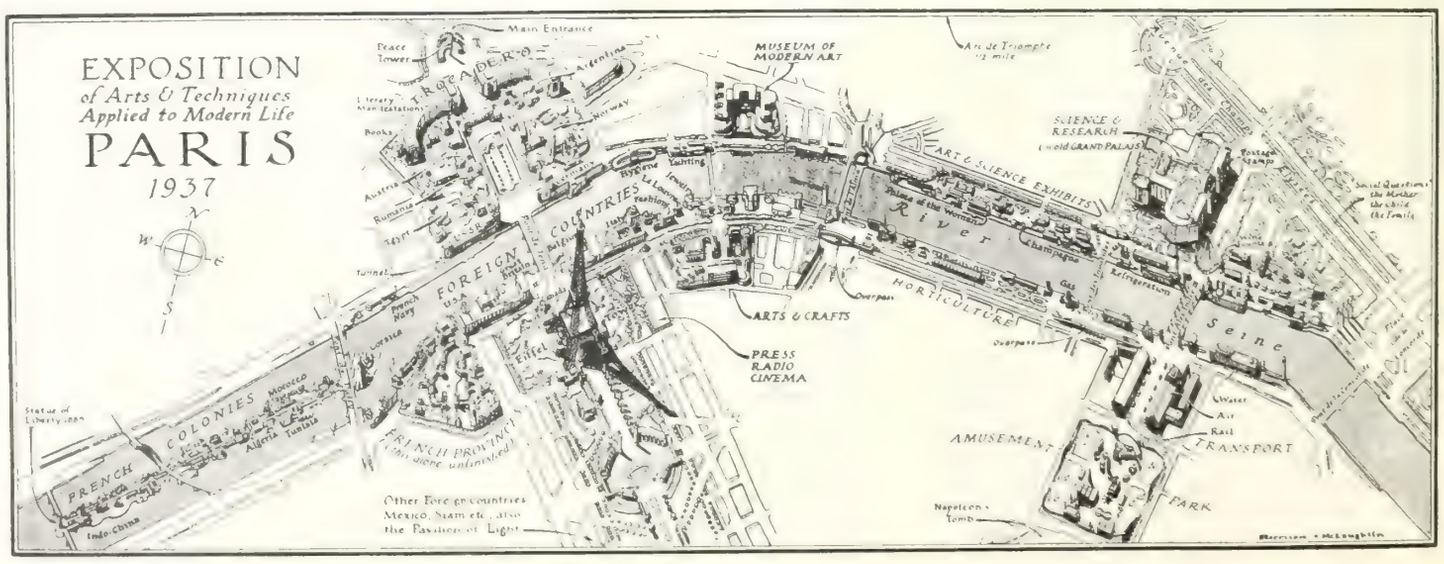
On the upper side of the building by the entrance, is a raised flower bed neatly filled with red gravel. Out of this rises a pink head, about 10 feet high, featureless and faceless, and curving around it one lone palm tree, its feathery top green and waving and alive.

Then one joins the crowd pushing into the pavilion. The air is stifling and unventilated and in the dim light one sees twisted Baroque pillars and heavy plaster palms ingeniously placed against the concave walls. The feeling at first is that everything is dusty pink and hot and airless and unreal. But the Midi is plodding on and so one continues along a slowly ascending path. There are small groups of figures, each group representing one famous couturier. The figures are in dusty pink, roughly modelled plaster. They are very tall with tiny waists and a truly elegant length of limb. They have high round breasts, but their heads have no faces and their hands are 10 or 12 inches long, very large and very rough with sausage fingers. They stand with the lissome and unreal grace of the fashion drawing. On them the miracles of French weaving are draped with a sensitive awareness of Greece and India.

Each house shows only 2 or 3 figures. The colour and texture of each material is chosen with an exquisite sense of values. The figures stand in red gravel, the fibrous beauty of the materials enhanced inevitably by this contrast. The greatest dressmaker of them all, on her bit of red gravel, has tossed a coverlet made entirely of artificial flowers and on this sits a plaster "Elégante" under one spotlight and she is nude with a butterfly for company. In the corner, in semi-light, is a dress tossed over an unbelievable plaster chair and on the gravel a pair of sandals and a large hat. One only dares to guess what her awesome elegance will be when she rises from that false bed of flowers from under that false sun and dons her wisp of miraculously fashioned stuff, girdling her 10-inch waist with some rough, strange leather which a sailor might have dropped as he chased his girl through the back streets of Toulon.

One feels the genius of the French for this—the adornment of the elegant ones in exactly the mode of the moment. The whole thing is decked out in perverse contempt for itself. No rich heavy satins and laces, no ponderous furs, none of the opulent showiness of earlier days, when things were safe and the rich were safest of all. Now it is as well not to look so rich and not to use one's best car.

And a new kind of elegance, based on understatement and on a nonchalant throwing away of all appearance of the cares and furbelows of wealth has risen like a frail abnormal flower.




*Map by Courtesy of "Time"*

# THE PLEASURES OF MODESTY

## Extract from "A Tour of the Paris Exhibition; or England Unveil'd."

### Published at the Sign of the Tailor's Goose, 1937.

ANON, behind great Hitler's lofty Tomb,
And Stalin's Hopefuls, striding to their doom
Over a marble precipice; below
That relic of a Nineteenth Century Show,
The venerable tower of Monsieur Eiffel,
There lurks an inconsiderable trifle,
More like a parcel from a London Store
All wrapped for Christmas,—only this is more
Discreetly dight, as well befits the taste
Of British enterprise when baldly faced
With self-advertisement—there lurks in fact
That model of all diplomatic tact,
Shrunk like a spinster from the public gaze
Demure and smug—Le Pavillon Anglais!

Stranger, beware! You may expect to find
(Such misconceptions crowd your foreign mind)
The crowning Glory of our Iron and Steel,
The farmer's Heritage, the turning Wheel
That marks the Pit from which our Riches rise,
The Empire's spread, achievements in the Skies,
Upon the Ocean and the Earth—and more
Important still than all that's gone before,
Our People's Life to-day.

Stranger, come in,
Prepare Nirvana's final gift to win—
Behold a Peeress, who, you may determine
Is wax—but wears her Coronation Ermine.
Look up! And there, symbolically displayed
In photographic Splendour, and arrayed
As well as any Britisher could wish
In cap and waders, Chamberlain catching Fish.
Near him, to curb such hints of politics,
Admire this showcase, full of hockey sticks;
See guns and darts and archery—and all
The many Games for which you use a Ball.
But, lest at last this inspiration pall
To Clothing turn—for are we not in Paris,
That town of chic, of brogues and tweeds from Harris?

Admire the garbs so grimly sewn for sport,
For Hunting, Shooting, and—a happy thought—
This charming Kilt, with hairy Sporran paired,
Fit covering for any Sassenach Laird.
Rove with your eyes, and check th' insulting wince
Before cascades of Satin, Muslin, Chintz.

Examine carefully—there's nothing finer
Within this Hall—those serried rows of China,
Nor must you miss the photographic Mural
Proving that Angleterre is dumb—if rural.
You ask, where are the achievements of the Nation?
Surely beyond this strange conglomeration
There lies a broader, more exciting Space
Wherein there shines the Glory of our Race?

Search diligently. On a Shelf remote
You may observe the latest Flying Boat
(A modelled Midget), and a small "Queen Mary"
Vying for note—the glass case none too airy—
With a streamlined—but not the latest type
(For we prefer our Harvests over-ripe)—
—A streamlined Locomotive. If you find them
Do not expect to learn, say, who designed them,
But read instead the magic words—so much
More in our character—"Please do not touch."

Regally blue, the lofty Ceiling soars
And as you gaze, you may in wonder pause,
For, also blue, and merging with the Plaster
There hangs—well nigh invisible—a faster
Flying Machine than any that can rape
Records between Old England and the Cape;
As large as life, but cunningly concealed,
It hangs remote and vague.
For those who wield
The Scythe, the Axe, and other Farming Tools
The Basement calls. The Stranger's Ardour cools,
For here no Tractors rear their hideous Fronts,
No modern Touch the old Regime affronts—
Instead—among a mass of Children's Toys—
A wooden Plough—the sort no one employs,
Reposes here in placid self-sufficiency
A work of Art, opposing all Efficiency. . . .

'Tis over. In the sunny Park once more
The Stranger strides towards another Door
Unwitting. Ere a warning one can utter, he
Is trapped again in the Olde Englyshe Buttery,
Where all sedately he can sit and sip a
Nice cup of Tea—and, sent by air, a Kipper
Fragrant and tender, will at last remind him
He's not left *all* Reality behind him.

# FLORA and FAUNA of the BRITISH FILM INDUSTRY

## "Our British Cinema, at the outset of its second decade of life, will be dependent for its prestige upon a large number of Foreign gentlemen," reports the FILM COUNCIL

THE Government's proposals for the revised Quota Act have created a sharp division of opinion both within the film industry itself and in the wider fields of public discussion. On one side are lined up those who conceive of British production as a magnetic field for attracting international capital and international personnel towards the making of films for the world market. Against this view the opinion is held that the original intention of the Quota Act was not only to make a British film industry economically possible, but also to ensure that such an industry, under the creative control of British people, should bring to the screen something of the life, tradition and culture of Britain and its Empire. Those who believe in this deeper purpose of the Act see in the White Paper proposals a preoccupation with money as a standard of judgment. They maintain that a revision of the Act on this basis will do little to encourage, and may directly hinder, the building up of a truly British film industry.

Under these circumstances it has seemed to us important to make some study of the creative personnel at present controlling the output of the British studios in order to see how far ten years of Quota working have contributed to the formation of an industry British in ideology* and outlook.

For the purpose of this survey we may consider British production under two heads: first, those British companies which were stimulated into existence as a direct or indirect result of the Act; second, the subsidiaries of the great American firms producing or about to start production in this country in fulfilment of their Quota obligations.

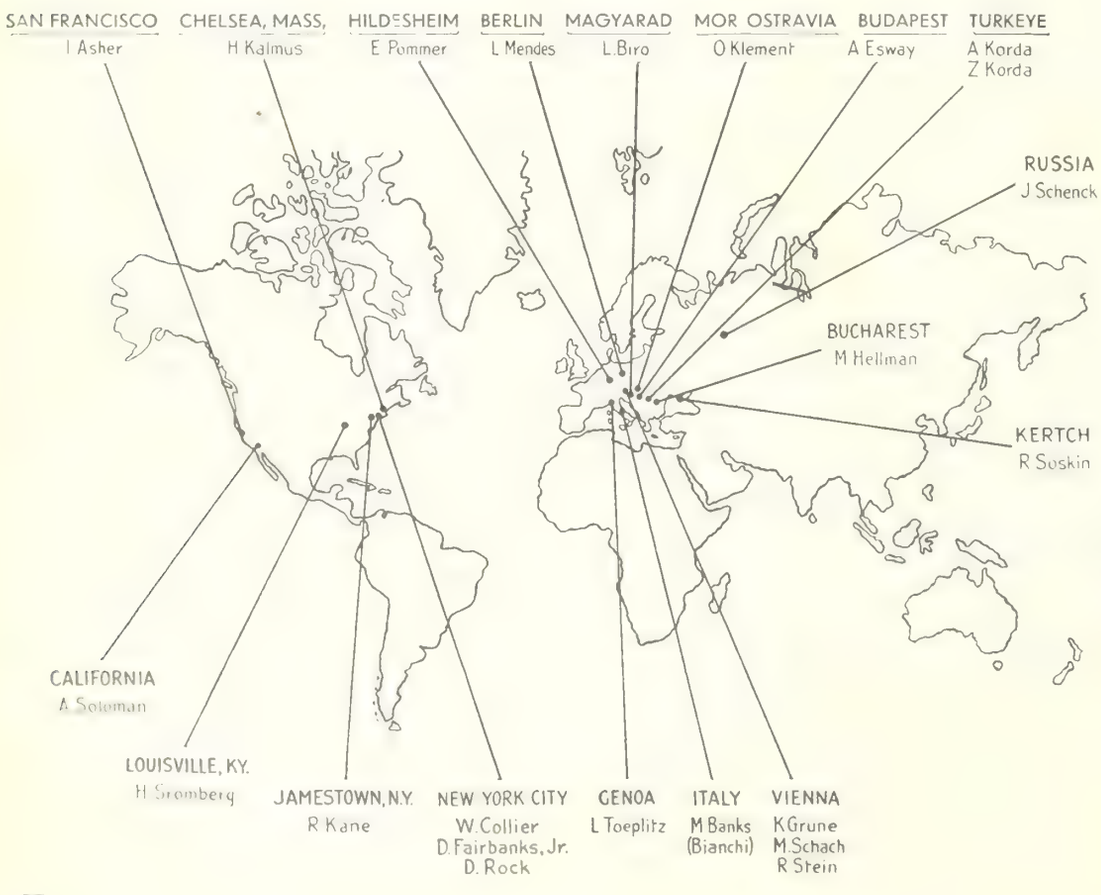
Let us first consider the case of the multitude of British companies which, seven months ago, were plunged into the depths o financial crisis. The field has emerged somewhat bedraggled for its experience, but its structure is still tolerably recognisable. In association with United Artsts we may still notice London Films, Atlantic, Criterion, Pall Mall, etc. Distributing through G.F.D. are Capitol, Trafalgar, Buckingham and Gainsborough, while in affiliation with the G.F.D. producing organisation at Pinewood are the remnants of G.-B. B.I.P. maintains its output for the cinemas of A.B.C., and working through their own renters are A.T.P., British Lion and other units.

Who, then, are the creative men behind these organisations, upon whose knowledge and interpretation of the British scene the prestige of the English cinema must stand or fall?

At the head of London Films is **Mr. Alexander Korda,** born at Turkeye, Hungary, in 1893. Mr. Korda entered the American film business in 1915, directing some 14 films for First National, Fox and other companies in America before coming to England for Paramount British in 1931. Closely associated with Mr. Korda at L.F.P. is **Mr. Zoltan Korda,** born at Turkeye, Hungary, in 1895. Mr. Z. Korda directed films in Berlin and Vienna, and also wrote for Fox before coming to England to assist his brother by directing *Sanders of the River* and co-directing *Elephant Boy*. Chief of the scenario department of London Films, and therefore in a position of authority with regard to British authors and their works, is **Mr. Lajos Biro,** born at Magyarad, Hungary, in 1883, who was appointed to the board of L.F.P. in 1932 after a continental career as scenarist and story-writer.

In the prominent creative post of producer to Atlantic Films is **Mr. Alexander Esway,** who was born at Budapest, Hungary. Mr. Esway entered the film business in 1922 in Berlin. He directed and wrote for UFA and D.I.S. (Berlin) before his arrival in England to associate himself with Gainsborough, B.I.P. and later with Columbia.

Leading the British production staff of Criterion Films we find **Mr. Douglas Fairbanks, Jnr.,** born in New York City in 1907,




*"It is not true that we English have no "ideology"; we have one, and it is the hope of the world."—Lord Eustace Percy in the *Sunday Times*, Aug. 15th, 1937.

who acted in more than 30 American films for M.G.M., Universal, Warner, First National, Columbia and Tiffany before placing his experience at the disposal of the British screen; and **Mr. Marcel Hellman,** who was born at Bucharest, Rumania, in 1898.

Director to Pall Mall is **Mr. Lothar Mendes,** born in Berlin in 1894, whose training was conducted on the theatrical stages of Berlin and Vienna, and whose experiences as a film director were largely gained under the foreign auspices of UFA, First National, Paramount and M.G.M.

At Inter-Allied Film Producers, a new United Artists affiliation, British production is in the hands of **Messrs. Joe Schenck** and **Paul Czinner.** After his birth in Russia on Christmas Day, 1882, Mr. Schenck went to America where he entered the film industry via the amusement-park business. After a long independent career in the U.S.A. he became chairman of 20th Century-Fox, president of 20th Century Pictures, president of United Artists and president of Metropolitan Playhouses Inc. In Dr. Czinner Inter-Allied have an able director of Austrian origin who has directed his wife (also of Austrian origin) in several outstanding British parts.

Interpreting the spirit of England for the G.F.D. units of Trafalgar, Buckingham and Capitol are three eminent natives of Austria: **Herren Max Schach, Karl Grune** and **Paul Stein,** all of whom were born in Vienna in 1890, 1892 and 1893 respectively. All, also, worked for UFA at different times. Herr Grune was associated with the Deutsches Theatre of Berlin before joining Emelka and Pathe-Natan, while Herr Stein was a stage actor in Berlin and Vienna, emigrating afterwards to America to direct for Warner, Cecil DeMille and Universal. Herr Schach graduated to the scenario department of UFA from a leading Berlin newspaper.

At Elstree the production unit of A.B.C. under the control of John Maxwell (born Glasgow, Scotland), is, we understand, soon to have a new addition to its forces in **Erich Pommer,** the celebrated continental producer who was born at Hildesheim, Germany, in 1899. Herr Pommer came to this country in 1936 to take up positions with Pendennis and Mayfair after a long career devoted to the development of the German cinema.

Nor should we forget those other and more independent company promoters, producers and technicians from across the seas who are familiar contributors to the prestige of the British cinema. Among these should be mentioned **Mr. Paul Soskin** (born Kertch, South Russia, 1905) whose architectural training and knowledge of European domestic styles should prove a great asset in the construction of British sets; **Count Ludovico Toeplitz de Grand Ry** (born Genoa, 1893), former managing director of the Genoese Terni Electricity Board and producer of 20 films for Cines-Pattaluga; **Mr. Joe Rock** (born New York City, 1893), whose long American film experience is now at the service of British exhibitors; **Mr. Otto Klement** of Garrett-Klement Pictures (born Mor Ostrava, Czechoslovakia), the celebrated continental publisher, play-broker and stage producer; and **Dr. Herbert T. Kalmus** (born Chelsea, Mass., 1881) the distinguished American academe and business man who, together with **Mrs. Kalmus** (born Boston, Mass., 1892), supervises from afar the British development of Technicolour.

Passing from the arena of purely British production to the American companies operating their own Quota-producing units in this country, we find Warner, First National, Paramount and 20th Century-Fox already in the field, and M.G.M. and Radio likely to start work in the near future. Of these, Paramount's English production has hitherto been carried on under wholly British auspices: but we are now informed that **Mr. J. C. Graham** (born Nebraska), Paramount's managing director in this country, has discarded his previous production associations in favour of other plans.

At the Teddington studio of Warner creative control of British production centres in **Mr. Irving Asher** (born San Francisco, 1903) who took up his present position in 1931; production takes place under the management of **Mr. A. M. ("Doc") Salomon** (born California, 1891) who was formerly

**Mr. Joe Schenck**

superintendent and chief of police for Warner at Burbank, Hollywood, while the producer is **Mr. William ("Buster") Collier, Jnr.** (born New York City, 1902), an actor of long experience on the American stage and screen. There is in addition an American scenario chief.

Production for 20th Century-Fox is in the hands of **Mr. Robert T. Kane** (born Jamestown, New York, 1886). Entering the film business more than 20 years ago, Mr. Kane organised and built the United Studios, California, and after a spell as general manager of Paramount Publix, took administrative control of Les Studios Paramount in Paris in 1930. Directing under Mr. Kane is **Mr. Monty Banks** (born Italy, 1897) whose real name is Maria Bianchi. Mr. Banks' aesthetic contribution to the English cinema includes such films as *Week-end Wives, The Compulsory Husband, Not so quiet on the Western Front, Kiss Me Sergeant, My Wife's Family* and *Mind Your Seat.*

It is evident that M.G.M. propose to take full advantage of the new Quota cost regulations in their English production, for we understand that their unit will have the services of at least three distinguished Americans: **Mr. Hunt Stromberg** (born Louisville, Kentucky) whose affiliation to M.G.M. as producer in 1925 was preceded by service as publicity director to the Goldwyn Company, and as personal representative to Thomas H. Ince; **Mr. Ben Goetz,** a laboratory pioneer formerly associated with Erbograph Laboratories and president of Consolidated Film Industries Inc.; and **Mr. Edwin K. O'Brien,** the American editor. We further understand that owing to the dearth of British cutters **Miss Margaret Booth,** American editor of *Mutiny on the Bounty, Camille* and *Romeo and Juliet,* has been granted a permit to work for M.G.M. over here. In the M.G.M. line-up as production representative in England is Mr. Michael Balcon (born Birmingham, 1896).

Concerning the future Quota product of Radio Pictures, information has reached us that a tie-up has been effected between that company and **Mr. Herbert Wilcox** (born Cork, Ireland, 1891).

Dotted here and there through this galaxy of skilled foreign assistance are some British producers and directors. There are Basil Dean (born Croydon, 1887), Alfred Hitchcock (born London, 1900), Victor Saville (born Birmingham, 1897), Norman Loudon (born Campbeltown, N.B., 1902) and John F. Argyle (born Staffordshire, 1911). There is also Isidore Ostrer, whose birthplace is not disclosed in any work of reference, founder of the great G.-B. studios at Shepherd's Bush, now dark and deserted.

To a large extent, therefore, our British cinema, at the outset of its second decade of protected life, will be dependent for its prestige and its profit upon Messrs. Asher, Banks (Bianchi), Biro, Collier, Czinner, Esway, Fairbanks, Goetz, Grune, Hellman, Kalmus, Kane, Klement, Korda, Korda, Mendes, O'Brien, Rock, Salomon, Schach, Schenck, Soskin, Stein, Stromberg, Toeplitz and their colleagues, not to mention the many technicians who have settled on our shores to lend us their expert aid. On these gentlemen and their creative attitude to our English industries, our countryside, our people (and our banking system), we depend for the projection of our national life. On their deep, inborn sense of our history, our heritage and our customs we depend for the dramatisation of our English traditions as well as for the more mundane business of fulfilling our British quota. They have a hard task, but we trust they will not desert us until their efforts have been crowned by success or frustrated by the obstinacy of our English financiers. We hope that not till then will they depart from among us to enjoy the fruits of their labours across the sea.

# ALIENS STIFLE

This is an anonymous article. The author is a British Film man, working in a British Studio. Such are the existing conditions, that his reasoned plea on behalf of the British Technician must be published unsigned.

ACCORDING to an editorial in the July number of *W.F.N.*, two policies exist in British film production to-day: to make films for the world (including the American) market, or to make films for the British market. It is true that, financing apart, a product of the first policy is easier to make than a product of the second policy. If a producer has a footing in the American market, he can spend more money on his production. He can afford to import ready-made stars and expert technicians, whose recent work he has seen and applauded. When he has tired of them he can ship them back home and import some more. He gets prestige and tremendous publicity from his ability to employ famous and successful people. And he can honestly explain to his backers that they cannot expect to make money at first; the industry is new; until he came along its scope was negligible; he is one of the few who are introducing British product to the screens of the world; but soon they (the backers) will begin to reap the benefits of their far-sighted policy. In the end he and they talk themselves into the belief that it is always more economical to spend in excess of £50,000 than any smaller sum.

But what sort of industry does this policy build up? Will it in ten years' time still be importing distinguished foreigners? Will it occasionally deign to lift from less ambitious British circles the local talent which these circles have laboriously selected and cultivated? Surely this policy is that of trying to run before you can walk? Is not this the policy which has directly caused the present slump?

Let us examine the second policy: production for the local market. Here it is risky to spend more than £30,000 on a picture. The producer is at once on his mettle. An English visa, a swell flat, and oodles of charm will cut no ice in this market. The producer must know his job to the full. And he must have experience of local conditions and of local talent among players and technicians. He can afford only one lesser star and one featured player. In fact his brain must be as reliable as his bank balance.

Under neither policy is it worth anyone's while to promote one single production, for no producer can guarantee a satisfactory financial return on one film. The only sane way to go about it is to raise a sum of money scaled to a continuous production policy on the understanding that losses may be sustained in the first year at least; that the next batch of product will break even; and that the policy will only expand if the financial returns justify such expansion. It is then up to the producer and his technical associates. But if they choose to tackle the more modest policy of the local market, they will be starting with both feet on the ground. *They* will be the experts, not a bunch of importees who would not have left their own country if they could have got as good an offer there as here, and who tend to find fault with their new subordinates rather than adapt themselves to local conditions. They will have to select, train, and encourage new blood, backing their own judgment of promising talent instead of amateurishly hiring ready-made "aces." And, incidentally, they will be building for the future a solid and expanding national industry instead of starting in top gear a plant designed to work expensively, but unable to guarantee anything but a "hit or miss" standard of product, and which can only claim international qualities by the obvious absence of any national qualities.

ONE of the worst aspects of the policy of trying to break into the world market before conquering your own is that the preponderance of aliens in key positions in the industry not only tends to produce a product lacking national character, but also develops an unhealthy inferiority complex in the rest of the technical staff, who are of local growth. The British technician is a product of a system which trains its youth to respect its elders. The youth of this country develops more slowly and matures later than the youth of most other nations. The young British technician develops more rapidly under the guidance of men of his own country than under aliens, who, strangers in a strange land, often fail to adapt themselves to local conditions. It is harder for a technician to produce good results in a foreign country than in his own, particularly at first. (For that matter a local technician who has become accustomed to working in one studio finds it irksome sud-

denly to change over to another studio in the same city.) The alien is concerned with getting immediately good results, not in building slowly to achieve a permanent improvement. For, firstly, he is not likely to have his contract and permit renewed if he fails to deliver the goods pretty quickly. And he always has the anxiety of wondering how long he will be allowed to stay, and how long it will be wise to stay, bearing in mind the fact that as he was not much sought after when he left his own country, it may not be long before he is completely forgotten there and his prospects of home employment have entirely evaporated.

For these reasons the alien expert tends to watch his own interests in relation to those of his employer rather than to train the staff under him who should be his immediate concern, and whose subsequent competence should be the measure of the value of the expert's present services. If, however, the alien looks forward to settling permanently in the country of his adoption, there is all the more temptation for him not to develop qualities in his subordinates that might bring them on to qualify for the position which he himself holds.

One finds cases of alien editors asking their assistants in the presence of their employers: "What have you been cutting this with? A blow-pipe?" One never hears the employer retort: "It is high time the assistants were taught better." And if the assistant answers back in these circumstances he knows there will be trouble for him when he gets back into the cutting-room.

Or take the case of the expert foreign cameraman who orders his assistants to shoot exteriors in bad weather conditions, and then shows the work privately to the producers in the projection room with the comment: "How the hell can I get good results when the staff you give me goes out and shoots a bunch of crap like that?"

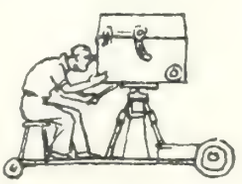
THERE are numbers of technicians in this country who are condemned to believe that they can never become first-rate in their profession because they never get that chance which is the legitimate adventure due to all promising talent. True, some of them do not deserve ever to get that chance for the simple reason that they should never have been brought into the industry at all. Nearly every production venture recently inaugurated in this country has been guilty of nepotism, both in bringing into the industry new blood that is unsuited for the work, either by temperament, upbringing, or sheer dumbness; and in promoting to positions of authority incompetent assistants; the only qualification in every case being blood relationship with the powers that be.

However, in spite of the fact that entry into the British film industry is entirely unregulated and no comprehensive scheme of training has yet been introduced, a considerable proportion of the technicians at present working or unemployed are potentially of the first class, and a sympathetic combing of the industry would soon surprise them into the light of recognition.

As it is, promotion in our industry is largely a haphazard, negative affair, based on sudden necessities which leave no other course open. And the surprise of the employer and technician concerned, when it turns out that the promotion was justified, is inevitably followed by a canny feeling on the technician's part that if the employer had had more faith and guts, promotion, and the promotion of others still subordinate, could have taken place long before.

In a recent case, a camera operator of long standing, who was obviously ripe for promotion to control of lighting, was ignored and put off by his employers for many months. He has now gone and proved his qualifications to a rival firm, who are successfully employing him in a position which none but aliens hold in his original studio. In another case it took six conversations to induce a certain producer even to examine the work of a new British director. Next day the producer offered the Britisher a film for immediate preparation and direction.

And so one could go on quoting instances of the neglect to build within our country, and of the easy, weak policy of looking abroad for established talent. The slump proves that too many producers were incompetent even when supported by the cream of alien talent. Too many of them liked to make expensive films so that they could pay themselves expensive fees. When their films flopped they floated other companies, and up they bobbed again. Now that the slump has taken the market value even out of their charm, let us take confidence and learn from our experiences. Let us believe in ourselves, welcoming the foreigner more judiciously, building our own industry for the exploitation of our own markets, before we begin beating our heads against the wall of opposition with which the Americans have surrounded their market. Then, as we begin to record small but definite results, and begin to make films strangely British and strangely likeable to our own people, we may again attract the honest sympathy of financial interests—those financial interests which have lately retired hurt, drained of resources, and sore at being proved suckers by promoters who were no more film-minded than parasites ever are.



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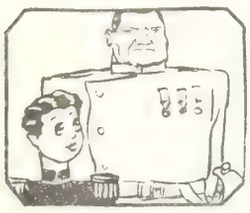
# PEOPLE OF THE STUDIOS

## Great Britain

### Denham



*I, Claudius* abandoned because of a car accident, and *Red Shoes* because of script trouble, Merle Oberon has been dogged by bad luck this season. *The Divorce of Lady X* is a final attempt to get her into a picture before her return to Hollywood—an adaptation by Robert Sherwood of the former West End stage hit "Counsel's Opinion," it was originally filmed by Korda as a Paramount quickie featuring Robert Donat. Donat was again debated for the lead, but insurance companies refused a policy owing to his numerous asthma breakdowns. Tim Whelan, directing *Lady X*, comes from Indiana . . . started stage career at the age of nine, later appearing on Broadway. Worked for Hal Roach way back in 1921, and lent a hand on most of the Harold Lloyd silents. After working as a scenario writer in association with Capra, came to England, writing and directing *Aunt Sally*, *The Camels are Coming*, and *Two's Company*. Latest pictures: *The Mill on the Floss*, *Farewell Again*, *Action for Slander*.

* * * *

Director Harold Schuster, former Fox editor in Hollywood, making good progress on *Follow the Sun*, with Annabella, Norah Swinburne, David Niven, Paul Lukas, and Stewart Rome. Annabella makes another for Schuster and New World, *Let's Go to Paris*, before her Hollywood debut.

* * * *

Thornton Freeland, over from Pinewood, where he made *Jericho* with Paul Robeson, to direct Jack Hulbert as a millionaire banker in *Paradise for Two*. . . . Patricia Ellis gets the feminine lead, with songs by Michael Spoliansky and dresses by René Hubert.

* * * *

George Périnal and Mrs. Natalie Kalmus in charge of photography and colour on *The Drum*, new Sabu picture . . . recently with Zoltan Korda in remote parts of the Welsh mountains matching scenes taken on the North West Frontier in India. A camera unit of twelve men on the top slopes of the Matterhorn, shooting backgrounds for *The Challenge*, new L.F.P. production to be directed by Milton Rosmer and produced by Gunther Stapenhorst. . . . Luis Trenker in charge of climbing sequences.

* * * *

John Maxwell now financially interested in Mayflower Productions, formed by Director Erich Pommer and Actor Charles Laughton. . . . Maxwell says "This is only a practical commerical unit in as much as the star and director are gambling their services to share in the profits." First picture will be based on Somerset Maugham's *Vessel of Wrath*, to be followed by Clemence Dane's busking story *St. Martin's Lane*, and Daphne du Maurier's *Jamaica Inn*. Elsa Lanchester co-stars with Laughton in the first.

Following the slump period Korda is negotiating with the hourly workmen to readjust all difference of opinion on working conditions. This is being done on an amicable basis between the representative committee of the workmen and Mr. Korda personally.

*W.F.N.* has heard recently that technical troubles in the Denham Laboratory have caused considerable delays to productions, necessitating reshooting of certain sections. These troubles are now under investigation.

### Sound City

Part documentary, *The Last Adventurers* depicts the hardships and dangers in the life of Arctic trawlermen. Roy Kellino, cameraman at Gainsborough, G.-B. and Elstree, is directing; Roy Emerton, tough boss of the line-gang in *The Great Barrier*, starring.

First picture by George King Productions is *Remember What?* with Claude Dampier. Action takes place in the 'eighties . . . the penny farthing bicycles providing Mr. Dampier with good comedy material. David MacDonald, late assistant at Paramount, is director.

### Pinewood

Maurice ("Pennies from Heaven") Johnson, song writing for Jessie Matthews' *Sailing Along* . . . graduated from church organist to dance-band pianist, later orchestrating and conducting big Broadway shows. With the advent of talkies teamed with Irving Berlin, then worked on Chaplin's *City Lights*. With Paramount before his Gaumont contract.

* * * *

Gaumont-British has twelve pictures on the slate for the coming season. . . . Jessie Matthews goes into *Sailing Along*, *Sparkle*, and *Glamorous Lady;* Anna Lee into *The Unconquered Woman* and *A Girl Must Live;* Anna Neagle into *Look Out for Love* and *The Show Goes On*; and Nova Pilbeam, after *The Girl Was Young* (new title for Hitchcock's *A Shilling for Candles*) gets *The Wedding Dream* and *Empty World*. Two others, as yet uncasted, are *The Lady of La Paz* and *The Girl Pat*.

* * * *

Lee Garmes, co-directing *The Sky's the Limit* with Jack Buchanan . . . came to England to direct Bergner's *Dreaming Lips*. Formerly with Fox and Paramount, made *Zoo in Budapest*, *My Lips Betray*, *I am Suzanne*, *Crime Without Passion* and *The Scoundrel*. Mara Losseff, a fugitive of the Russian revolution, starring with Buchanan . . . spotted by Richard Tauber a year or two back, made her name on the continental stage. Visited London on holiday last winter, and J.B. signed her on.

Buchanan's second film currently shooting . . . *Sweet Devil* with Bobbie Howes and Jean Gillie. Latter is another Buchanan discovery—she played a half-minute part in his *Brewster's Millions*, and he signed her as leading lady for his next show.

Hazel Terry, actress grand-niece of Ellen Terry, plays feminine lead in *Missing from Home*, picture of London street life. John Paddy Carstairs directs, with Julien Vedey and Wally Patch in the cast.

### Worton Hall

Erich von Stroheim and Dita Parlo, co-stars of the French film *La Grande Illusion*, making their bow in British pictures. . . John Loder, Clair Luce and Giles Isham support them in *Mademoiselle Docteur*, a spy story. Edmond Greville, responsible for *Remous* and *Marchand d'Armour*, is director, Max Schach producer.

* * * *

Twelve years dramatic and literary critic on a leading Berlin paper, Schach is one of many executives who entered films by way of journalism. In 1920 he joined UFA as scenario editor, later becoming an independent producer and associate of Karl Grune. At the invitation of Carl Laemmle he took on the general managership of Universal in Europe, and afterwards the general managership of Emelka, controlling four studios, eighty theatres and a distributing organisation. To England in 1934, and produced *Abdul the Damned* for B.I.P. In 1935 he formed the Capitol Film Corporation, in 1936 Trafalgar Film Productions, and this year Buckingham Film Productions.

### Teddington

Max Miller preparing for further exploits of Educated Evans, Edgar Wallace's breezy tipster.

* * * *

Joc Orton and John Meehan, comedy screenwriters, signed by Irving Asher . . . *Dr. Satan*, their second for Warners, scheduled for early production.

Joc Orton, chiefly responsible for Jessie Matthews' first screen test and co-director of her first picture, collaborated on several Hulbert-Courtneidge comedies . . . scripted *Everything is Thunder* and *Turn of the Tide* for G.-B. and *The Flying Doctor* for Fox. Recently wrote *Transatlantic Trouble* for Max Miller, and *Oh, Mr. Porter* for Will Hay.

### Islington

The Crazy Gang has signed on for three years with Gainsborough—next picture is *Alf's Button*, comedy story by W. A. Darlington. Rene Houston booked as their leading lady.

Robert Stevenson, director of *Tudor Rose*, *King Solomon's Mines*, and *Non-Stop New York*, directing *Owd Bob* with Will Fyffe and Margaret Lockwood . . . he and John Goldman have been shooting sheep-dog trial sequences up on Exmoor. After he's through with the picture, Stevenson hopes to take a year's vacation in Cornwall—to write a play.

## America

### Paramount

Rouben Mamoulian, director of *High, Wide and Handsome*, has scored again . . . this time by mixing music, history and drama. Born in Caucasus, Mamoulian graduated from a law school at Moscow University, turned to the theatre, and at the age of 24 had produced a play in London. George Eastman, president of Eastman Kodak, took him to the States where he scored a success with Maurice Maeterlink's "Sister Beatrice," following it up with "Porgy," which ran for three years on Broadway with a cast recruited from shops, cabarets and streets in Harlem. Thence to Hollywood to make *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Song of Songs*, *Queen Christina*, *Becky Sharp* and *The Gay Desperado* . . . each made with the Mamoulian touch, a flare for the unusual, and disregard for traditional treatment.

* * * *

John Barrymore signed for *Bulldog Drummond Comes Back*. Louis King directing. Reginald Denny in the cast.

### United Artists

Selznick planning to give the long-suffering newspaper profession a break . . . starting production on *Freedom of the Press*, depicting the history of the Associated Press of America and the part it played in the development of American journalism. Film to be made after the *Lloyds of London* style.

Toss up whether Selznick's *Nothing Sacred* or Goldwyn's *Marco Polo* comes out of the studio first. William Wellman directs the former, Archie Mayo the second, with Fredric March and Gary Cooper in the respective leads. Ben Hecht wrote the screenplay of *Nothing Sacred* . . . once a Chicago journalist, Hecht has scripted many films to success, among them *Scarface*, *Design for Living*, *Viva Villa*, *Crime Without Passion*, *Barbary Coast*, and *The Scoundrel* (awarded Academy Prize for the best original story of 1935). He has now signed on with Goldwyn to write *Sweet Land of Liberty*, satire on the Federal Theatres.

Seems as though United Artists' executives and actors are intermixing. . . . Producer Walter Wanger and Director Frank Borzage playing atmosphere roles in *Stella Dallas*, Lubitsch toying with the idea of playing Napoleon and Leslie Howard threatening to turn producer.

General exodus of Wanger stars from Hollywood, as the producer insists that an unbroken spell in the Film City brings on staleness. Joan Bennett goes into repertory after finishing *I Met My Love Again*, and co-star Henry Fonda goes onto Broadway. Sylvia Sidney stars in the Theatre Guild production of Ben Hecht's *To Quito and Back*, Madeleine Carroll is holiday-making in Europe, and Charles Boyer is Paris bound. Wanger himself is planning an elaborate picture to be made in Italy . . . at present assembling information on production facilities and technical crews. He hopes to cement friendly relations between film industries of Italy and the States.

### Warner Bros.

Mervyn LeRoy producing *The Great Garrick* with Brian Aherne, Worcester-born star, in the name-part. . . . Olivia de Haviland and Edward Everett Horton in the cast. Ernst Vajda, scriptwriter of *A Woman Rebels* and *Man in Possession*, responsible for the original screenplay. LeRoy's last four pictures, *Three Men on a Horse*, *Anthony Adverse*, *The King and the Chorus Girl*, and *They Won't Fogret*, all big hits.

After one more picture Paul Muni plans a couple of years' holiday for rest and travel . . . talking of heading for the Orient, across Siberia and Russia. Final story not yet set . . . he has turned down *Beethoven*, *Panama Canal*, and *Kimberley*.

Pat O'Brian, George Brent, and Wayne Morris putting over some tough stuff in *Submarine D1*, which Lloyd Bacon is shooting. Commander Frank Wead, author of *China Clipper* and *Sea Devils*, wrote the original.

### M.G.M.

Carle Laemmle, jun., signed as producer as M.G.M. . . . among his big pictures for Universal are *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Show Boat*, *Frankenstein*, *The Invisible Man* and *Journey's End*. While still in his teens he was writing, casting, editing and supervising, and in 1929 was appointed general manager of Universal.

Harry Rapf, one-time actor in a Denver minstrel show and now one of the company's leading producers, has two productions on the floor. . . Wallace Beery and James Stewart in *Bad Men of Brimstone*, and Robert Montgomery, Robert Benchley, Una Merkel, and Micky Rooney in *Live, Love, and Learn*.

Luise Rainer teams up with Spencer Tracy in *Big City*, a racketeering picture. Norman ("*Fury*") Krasna wrote the screen story, Frank Borzage directs.

Adrian, ace Hollywood dress-designer, on the prowl in Paris for authentic clothes for *Marie Antoinette* . . . production scheduled to start soon with Norma Shearer in the top spot.

*Saratoga*, which Jean Harlow only three-quarter finished, now completed and released with Mary Dees doubling for the star. Miss Dees has pocketed a seven-year contract as a result of her work.

* * * *

Shorts, almost annihilated by double-feature programmes, are coming into their own . . . in point of volume Metro leads with Paramount, Radio, Columbia, and Warners as runners up. On the Metro schedule are four Pete Smith shorts (Olympic champions, bad cheques, professional football and radium), six *Crime Does Not Pay* films, six miniature operettas, ten Carey Wilson psychology briefs, ten *Believe It or Not* historical mysteries, several straight historicals and travelogues, twelve *Our Gang* comedies, and four Robert Benchley scientific and educational subjects (*How to Start the Day*, *How to Raise a Baby*, *How to Figure Income Tax* and *How to Make an Impression*).

### And Others . . . .

James Cagney making *Something to Sing About*, reputedly his last for Grand National. Victor Schertzinger wrote and directs.

Capra still refusing to report at Columbia . . . says his contract has been violated. Columbia state his next is *Chopin*, and that Sidney Buchman has been scripting.

Arthur Kober writing screenplay for his own Broadway success *Having Wonderful Time* . . . Radio to shoot.

A Fred Astaire-Ginger Rogers co-starrer to be made in technicolor after Astaire's *Damsel in Distress* is off the floor. Also Radio.

## Australia

Stuart F. Doyle, managing director of Cinesound, Ltd., is quitting production in Australia, and the fate of the company is in the balance. Doyle says that the Government has given little encouragement to production, that the Quota Acts are badly designed, and that his own efforts to point out faults to the Government have been ignored. States that no trade knowledge has been apparent in the designing of Acts for the industry, and that local production is doomed unless revolutionary methods are adopted.

A few months back Doyle was forced out of Greater Union Theatres Ltd., because of his insistence that the company should split with Hoyts Theatres. Greater Union has now decided to break away, which may lead to the return of Doyle despite his antagonistic outlook on the picture business. Meanwhile Norman Rydge, succeeding him at the helm, is left with the problem of where to get films. Charles Munro, of another circuit, recently tied up Columbia, Universal, United Artists, 20th Century-Fox and Warners, and both Paramount and Metro have their own houses. Rydge claims to know the solution, but will not divulge it.

## Argentine

President Justo's suggestion that all picture houses close down at midnight has caused considerable dissension in the daily papers. Justo argues that it is physically and mentally bad for the working population to hold out until three and four in the morning, when the late picture shows finish.

Members of the Society of Cinema Owners argue that the customary minimum of five full-length features per programme positively forbids the cutting of hours. They claim the loss of midnight patronage would be too heavy.

The following placard was recently posted on all church doors in Buenos Aires: "Fathers and mothers, recognise your responsibilities. A single hour passed in the obscurity of a cinema that shows a bad film, destroys in the soul of your children a year's work accomplished by the Church, the home and the school." And the notice was followed by a list of current releases, under the headings "Acceptable," "Poor, "Bad."

# *Five Films*

## *by John Grierson*

**A Day at the Races**

An M.G.M. film, directed by Sam Wood, with the Marx Brothers.

**Easy Living**

A Paramount picture, directed by Mitchell Leisen, with Edward Arnold, Jean Arthur and Ray Milland.

**Said O'Reilly to McNab**

A Gainsborough picture, directed by William Beaudine, with Will Fyffe and Will Mahoney.

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THERE is, on West End screens, a very pretty sense of how the public peace or complacency can be best disturbed. At a time when the country is asking what is wrong with the Labour Party, Messrs. Attlee, Bevin and Greenwood might learn from it. In easy foot work, length of reach and unexpectedness of crosses, they are by all odds inferior in equipment to the Marx Brothers. I recommend *A Day at the Races* as a classical exercise in Opposition. Messrs. A, B and G may catch from it, if they care, that secret of high anarchy without which no body of criticism (His Majesty's or any other) was ever worth the bother of maintaining. It may help them if they regard Groucho's home for rich neurasthenics as a pleasant commentary on our Defence Departments and the plight of the unfortunate race horse Nelly—so pestered by duns that it has to be accommodated on the fifteenth floor and fed on the bedroom mattresses—as not dissimilar to that of the League of Nations. But, as people who are too serious by half and not enough, they will mostly learn from the Tactic of Inconsequence.

When faced with the Sublime (Niagara, Baldwin or Mussolini) Kant from Koenigsberg recommends, like any trade union leader, a snivelling glance to the starry heavens above, though it is difficult to see why when he so accurately defines the sublime as "that the mere ability to think which shows a faculty of mind *far surpassing any standard of sense*." Being less provincial philosophers, the Marx Brothers take the definition at its word. With a whoop they are round the corner of Nonsense and what happens to the Kantian devotee is nobody's business. At the very least it is what Groucho does to Margaret Dumont in the operating theatre of his neurasthenic sanatorium. In what my critical stable mate across the page describes as a "nightmare tangle of voodoo, dentistry and hairdressing," the one thing which is finally disentangled is the divine symposium of the dignities and snobberies which Miss Dumont so happily represents in every Marx Brothers comedy. Sociological students will appreciate that nothing is so likely to perform this feat, as a "tangle of voodoo, dentistry and hairdressing."

It may be that others, more gently, have applied the same critical tactic, and all good satirists do. The special secret of the Marx Brothers is in the physical quality they have been able to add. We have had nothing like their sense of direct action since Gulliver invited the insults of the arboreal Yahoos. The mechanistic persistence of Chico's crookedness, the enthusiastic sacrifice of sense and sanity to speed and certainty on the part of Groucho, the mad dashes of Harpo after any and every indiscriminate suggestion, have a passion about them which no statement in a slower medium could hope to match. It is in this that the Marxes make their chief contribution to the cinema. They have made its physical speed an essential part of their art. Anyone who has seen the relatively crude efforts on the music-hall stage to achieve a similar frenzy—whether in the antics of the Crazy Gang at the Palladium or in the vaudeville version of the Marx Brothers themselves—must recognise the importance of this cinematic asset.

In one matter *A Day at the Races* represents a dangerous deviation from the true Marxist doctrine. It has been described by good critics as "striking a perfect balance between fantasy and reality," meaning that the background of young musical comedy love, with tearful heroine and hero bellowing to the moon (reality), fits with perfect balance into the extravagance of the Marxian antics (fastasy). The other view is that having gone so far to debunk the niceties of human intercourse it would have been simple decency on the part of the Brothers to debunk love's young dream as well. In previous films they have done it and I am sure only considerations of the box-office has dictated respect in this instance. Their previous treatment of love's young dream has lost them half a million dollars a picture.

Be that as it may, there is enough in this epic of social sabotage to make *A Day at the Races* a very distinguished performance. Our students, Attlee, Bevin and Greenwood have only to find political equivalents for mixing a Negro sing-song with the Pied Piper, middle-aged romance with paper hanging, Ascot with a traffic jam and a ceremonial reception with a night in Haarlem; and the quality of His Majesty's Opposition will be up to standard in no time.

WHAT is left of Humpty Dumpty after the Marx Brothers are done with him is, with almost equal skill, reconstructed in *Easy Living*. This is a racy and amusing film which, in technical nicety, must be the despair of every director in Britain. If Cinderella stories must be told and the miracle of coincidence brought to solve the problem of poverty and wealth, then this is as good a day-dream as any. The girl is pretty and deserving, without being a bore about it; the young millionaire is too up-to-date and knowing to give any hint of patronage; and the contraption by which they are brought together is as happy and various in invention as anything out of Heath Robinson. The sable coat falls from heaven on the shoulders of the passing poor and, invested in this badge of plutocratic favour, it is simple logic that every other luxury should follow. We have the evidence in our own beloved film trade of how confidence, a cigar and the broken accent of Art can take a cool million from the City. It is a mere matter of arithmetic what a sable coat and a suspected liaison with Mr. Bull of Wall Street can do to the more innocent gentry of the hotels and the sales rooms. Faith, as ever, delivers the necessary limousines.

What I find most interesting about the film is that, in reducing the parties to their common human elements, it effectively abolishes the distinction of rich and poor altogether. Who can complain of Wealth when he beats his wife like any honest man, allows himself good-naturedly to be called a "greasy capitalist," and knows rather less about finance than the lucky pin of his secretary? He is obviously a pleasant and human fellow. Beat your wives happily together, the film seems to say, and what's in a bank balance?

I HAD better mention too, the British film, *Said O'Reilly to McNab*, which I saw, as it ought to be seen, in Glasgow. There have been better Glasgow accents than Will Fyffe's—he could not compare in virtuosity with the late lamented Tommie Lorne—but it will ring a bell anywhere between Bridgton Cross and Gilmorehill. Here, Fyffe and Mahoney play out a Scots-Irish comedy in which canny and uncanny crookeries are evenly matched. The humour is robust rather than subtle and so is the acting, though Fyffe, if encouraged, might easily lose his

# REVIEWED

## *by Basil Wright*

### Woman Chases Man

A United Artists film, directed by John Blystone, with Miriam Hopkins, Joel McCrea, Charles Winninger, and Erik Rhodes.

### Wild Money

A Paramount picture, with Edward Everett Horton, Lynne Overman, and Louise Campbell.

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*John Grierson—continued*

habit of music-hall emphasis and become a good film actor. In one episode, in particular, where, as the cautious Scot, he becomes gradually and by nuance entangled in a confidence trick, he puts in some quiet and distinguished acting, and shows he has the right idea. But quiet acting is not the sort of thing we are encouraging these days. In our desperate search for narrative speed, and a very proper search too, quietness is giving every director the jitters. The elements of punctuation will come later, and better so. We have been trying to make films with nothing but, for the past ten years.

The emphasis to take on this *O'Reilly* picture is that, like several recent British comedies, it has an improved sense of speed and dialogue, and Gainsborough may compliment themselves on a picture which is bound to be a great success. Consider it as taking a further step in the humble development of real British cinema, and it becomes even an important picture. One pity—and I hope there is nothing psychological about it—is that it makes the same disastrous mistake as the recent British comedy *Storm in a Teacup*. It does not know how to finish. There is a damaging longueur in which Mahoney dances to the point of boredom and an idiotic and extraneous Spanish dance is added to that. The effect is to break down the atmosphere of speed and expectancy which has been skilfully built up over the length of the picture.

Gainsborough might also look into their choice of supporting characters. There are one or two duffers who stick out like sore thumbs. But, all in all, it is good to see this sort of thing coming along and so regularly—in spite of the British film depression. I confess I expected to see the sun rise from another quarter than Islington, but Islington is a real part of London, and I am glad to be wrong. If rollicking and robustious comedy is the best thing to do—and there seems no question—we had better lower our noses and give it every help we can.

SALUTE to Miriam Hopkins, who could act every female off our Shaftesbury Avenue stages, and makes the screen too narrow for several Hollywood big shots we could mention. She is with us again in a film which means just nothing at all—except perhaps that there is more and more wood-alcohol getting into the Clicquot so carefully imported by Lubitsch and other pre-Hitler emigrés. Just a farce; location, one mansion and a convenient tree; cast, four good players and the beautiful Hopkins; story, not worth a synopsis. Sam Goldwyn, who produced, has always been good at starring-vehicles, and there is no other reason for this film, which presents unsullied by technical tricks, "a lady richly clad as she, beautiful exceedingly."

These sort of films are really very interesting, because the production values tend to be lower than usual. In a way this is no exception. Its directorial sense and its timing are far below *Easy Money* or *Love is News*. The scenario is no more than a clothes peg for farcical situations. The sets are ordinary—though very competently photographed. Stock characters repeat lines which weren't terribly funny way back when Schnozzle Durante was at high school.

There remains Miriam Hopkins. And why not, just for once, sit back and enjoy talent and personality? The camera faithfully records the least quiver of a come-hitherish eyelash; the microphone lovingly presents each nuance of a voice which has been really trained to do its job. Technique? Yes, acting technique. Timing? Yes, in terms of muscular control.

She is always a dangerous woman; watch her, in *Woman Chases Man*, chase without mercy, conquer without mercy, and capitulate without mercy. Watch her take charge of a thoroughly uninspired bit of shooting, smash it to bits, and build it up again for her own fantastic ends. Watch her invest some of the surrounding characters with her own peculiar glory. And remember Defoe's preface to *Roxana*—"The story of this beautiful lady is to speak for itself."

Perhaps it is time to remind you not to go and see *Woman Chases Man* unless you are a Hopkins fan, or a Joel McCrea fan for that matter; he has his points, but this time just misses the Gary Cooper possibilities in his so-called part.

*Wild Money* is an unpretentious little second feature—so unpretentious in fact that it uses the same cafeteria set as *Easy Living*, with which it was double-billed at the Plaza. One seldom notices these share-and-share-alike sets; although they are a good idea and highly economic, one hesitates (from previous experiences) to recommend them to our Home Studios (there's enough hire-purchase atmosphere already). But *revenons à nos Hortons*, for the fun of this film is that whereas we always expect the unexpected to happen to Edward Everett Horton, on this occasion the unexpected happens to us. This mild, exasperated, and slightly suspicious darling we all know so well, suddenly blossoms out as a tough guy, getting all he wants regardless of anything except the strict moral sense without which he would be as naught.

He appears, in fact, as an accountant on a newspaper, interested only in petty-cash economics, and regrettably in love with a good-looking but poisonous little female reporter. The perfect sucker, as usual; until, on a backwoods holiday vacation, he finds himself scooping a terrific kidnapping story for his paper. The other reporters arrive, but Horton, solemnly in charge, does the he-man act, foresees nearly everything (including the fact that he will need a large tractor in Reel 6), and generally makes good. It is here necessary to mention that the reporters are portrayed as such reptilian abominations that one feels that the director has some special grudge against the press.

It may just be possible that Horton exploits the same dramatic ability as Zasu Pitts—and for the same ends. Just as she wrings her hands in slapstick with the same tragic fervour as in *Greed*, but with an added fantasy of exaggeration, so maybe Horton's sudden nervous gestures—the innocent but fearful glance, the smile awry with prescience of a kick in the pants, the attempts, predoomed to frustration, to stand up nobly in a disastrous world—these too may be the fundamentals of more serious possibilities.

Certainly, in this film, when he shoulders his responsibilities, the old gestures remain, but take on a more serious meaning. One might almost, if it were not bad manners to philosophise about trifles, detect in this performance a faint suspicion of the grand tradition.

But this is probably silly season stuff. All in all, the film has that nice open air quality common to many inexpensive Hollywood productions; there is that faint whiff of woodsmoke and open-air cooking which endears us to the Western; and Horton is lovable and slightly stern for a change and brings it off. Let us leave it at that.

# *Review of the Month*

## *A Day at the Races*

(Sam Wood—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
The Marx Brothers.

There was a time when Harpo, his strangely soulful face made grotesque by his wig, would pick up the nearest telephone and thoughtfully start eating it. Those were the days when the Marx Brothers were the emotional escapologists of comedy, when they took you to an unhampered world where the only reason was complete lunacy.

There is no comparison, in my submission, between the Marx boys as they were then, and the trio as they are now.

When Groucho talked so fast that you could not understand him until your second or third visit, he was doing more than wisecracking. He was talking for the benefit of every talker who had sometimes flattered himself that he was a wit. Everyone with a tongue in his head must have wanted an option on Groucho's conversation—if only for the pleasure of refusing it.

When Harpo, having eaten his telephone and munched a couple of flowers by way of savoury, dashed like a madman after every blonde in the picture, always pulling out that priceless gag of lifting up his leg so that other people would save him the trouble of having to hold it, he was lifting an audience to a crazy world of life without a libido. I think Harpo was one of the greatest clowns in the world.

Chico, the little man, with his absurd hat and his rich Bowery accent, stood between the two high apostles of imbecility, downtrodden, always making mistakes, finding relief in thumping a piano while Harpo paused in the madness to strum a harp.

Behind them all, necessary counterpoint to their humour, was Zeppo, now retired to the agency business, the good-looking fellow who did nothing but pull the leading lady towards him every once in a while as much as to say "This is where the scenario gives me a love scene." Zeppo was important to the brethren ; he was the mooring mast to their airship humour, bumping them back to earth.

Now in *A Day at the Races*, the new Marx team, humanised with infinite skill by the clever Metro studios, the comedians are not, to me, the Marx Brothers, except in snatches. Groucho still prattles incessantly, sometimes with his old fire. But Harpo, key man of the combination, is subdued. This is a frustrated Harpo, who cannot yelp after the first blonde he sees, who can only chew medical thermometers, a man devoid of a succulent telephone or a tasteful piece of furniture. Chico, perhaps, comes out the best of them now, bewildered Chico who sells a racing tip so thoroughly that by the time he has completed the deal the race is over.

Metro have, as it were, translated the Marx Brothers. They are now slapstick comedians of rare ability, doing their work better than almost any other screen team. But they are not those irresponsible maniacs who spun around like tops in a world where Freud came in at the window as Harpo went out eating the door.

From an audience point of view there is no doubt that Metro are right. Dead right. *Cocoanuts* and the earlier pictures were not big successes. The brethren were not many people's kettle of fish so much as most people's red herrings.

In their new film, which deals with a sanatorium and a racehorse which must win to pay the family mortgage, they have dived into a world of slapstick burlesque, extremely funny stuff which will make you laugh even if you have never previously creased a smile out of a Marx film. To the real Marx admirers the film will be a landmark denoting the position beyond which it was no longer commercially possible for them to make films for a small minority. To cinema-goers as a whole the comedy is a pippin.

—Connery Chappell, *The Sunday Dispatch*

**Harpo, Groucho and Chico . . . "A Day at the Races"**

## *King Solomon's Mines*

(Robert Stevenson—Gaumont-British.)
Cedric Hardwicke, Paul Robeson, Anna Lee, Roland Young.

*King Solomon's Mines* is described as "from the novel by Rider Haggard." "From" is the word, though to make its meaning more explicit the phrase "a long way away" ought to have preceded it. Now one cannot complain at the mutilation of Rider Haggard's work in the same way as one complains of the mutilation of the life of Parnell. The book, after all, was a mere thriller, not a classic, and the producer is therefore entitled to add to it or subtract from it anything that he wishes. But at least one is entitled to insist that this cinematic arithmetic should result in an improvement. The producers of *King Solomon's Mines* have improved nothing. They have subtracted much that was good, and added a great deal of nonsense. That the film remains exciting at all is not their fault but Rider Haggard's, since it is the surviving relics of his book that form all the climaxes.

—*Truth*

The film of *King Solomon's Mines* is not so exciting as the book used to be. This is partly due to its age and partly too, no doubt, to jaded taste, but all the same the film has weaknesses from which the book was free. The original story is not so valuable that minor departures from it are necessarily damaging. And in what is anyway fantastic, one is not entitled to grumble about small inaccuracies of custom and language—such as, for example, the convention by which the black men speak decent English but no recognisable Bantu dialect. But it would be insulting to Mr. Robeson to think of him as a small inaccuracy. His fundamentally gentle nature is out of place in the proud and warlike Umbopa as is his velvety Mississippi bass on South Africa's dry and stony tracks. Once Mr. Robeson is engaged for a part, singing becomes inevitable. And *King Solomon's Mines* responds a little ludicrously to operatic treatment. Ungenerous though it seems to say so, this film would probably have been better with a lesser artist in Mr. Robeson's place, and if the interest had been focused more directly on his adventures.

—*The New Statesman and Nation*

### W.F.N. Selection

*A Day at the Races* * * *

*Easy Living* * *

*Talking Feet* *

### *Other Films Covered in this Issue*

*Said O'Reilly to McNab*

*Woman Chases Man*

*Wild Money*

*King Solomon's Mines*

*Saratoga*

*God's Country and the Woman*

*The Show Goes On*

*On the Avenue*

*Slave Ship*

*Michael Strogoff*

*Dance Under the Gallows*

*Mad Girl*

*The Thirteen*

*Yiddle With His Fiddle*

## *Saratoga*

(Jack Conway—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
Jean Harlow, Clark Gable, Lionel Barrymore, Frank Morgan, Una Merkel.

Had *Saratoga* been finished, it might not have been one of Miss Harlow's most successful pictures. Curiously and sadly enough, though unfinished, unedited, with the scenes she was unable to play rather desperately tricked and manœuvred, the film asserts over and over again how vital was her personality and how great has been the loss to the movie world. In the role given her here, she had no chance for that special comedy which was her unique gift. This part was not a rowdy one, and it was her talent to make the rowdy charming, absurd, and delightful. It is thus all the more astonishing that what breath of life there is in the picture is in those scenes she had completed. And in those scenes one cannot help but feel the great freshness of her looks and of her youth. The moment she is off the screen, even in this incongruous and doubtless uncongenial stilted part, the film is blurred and dispirited. Of course it is painfully stilted and blurred in the scenes which were fabricated to fill out the sketch and make it a finished story. In this story of race track life, the climax was intended to be a critical race, so near a tie as to require a slow-motion picture for the decision. But as it has been presented without Jean Harlow, it appears on the screen as a mere suggestion, a hint of what might have been a climax. And since films are made the way they are, Miss Harlow herself appears for one brief final farewell moment, and all the intervening dreary, confused scenes are forgotten and the whole film seems alive again.

—John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

*Critical Summary.*

*The picture is little more than a museum piece, the unfinished swan-song of a star. Miss Harlow may not have been a great actress, but she succeeded in a medium which can find a vivid and vital personality of greater value than histrionic ability. No one could have been more brilliantly suited to those slick, high-speed comedy romances which Hollywood makes so well. She overcame the early handicap of being, as the original platinum blonde, little more than a freak beauty, and achieved her masterpiece in the name part of "Blonde Bombshell." Her place will be hard to fill.*

## *God's Country and the Woman*

(William Keighley—Paramount.)
George Brent, Beverley Roberts, Alan Hale.

*God's Country and the Woman* is conventional outdoors stuff, indebted for what interest it may possess to the work of George Brent, and the fact that it is photographed in Technicolor. The colour is perhaps a little better than that in *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, the story a good deal worse. Mr. Brent is a Montague of the backwoods, Beverley Roberts the last of the Capulets. The rival lumber kings have carried on a feud for years, and at the moment the story opens their followers are just beginning to beat each other up and take pot-shots with Winchesters—apparently a legal proceeding in this neck of the woods. Mr. Brent is an easy, likeable actor, never wholly bogus, and if we must have tough heroines for these open spaces, I suppose Beverley Roberts will do as well as anybody.

—George Campbell, *The Bystander*

*God's Country and the Woman* is a highly-coloured melodrama of the logging camps ("Only God can make a tree," as the song says) aptly presented in Technicolor's best blues and greens and russets. It is the old story, first told by James Oliver Curwood fifteen years ago, of the easy-going Easterner who finds himself unwittingly helping a girl lumber-boss against the high-handed methods of his own brother's camp. It has all the zest of the old screen classics, not to mention the fighting. The star of the piece is pre-eminently God's Country, its woods and waters and wide skies lending themselves generously to the colour camera. There is always something formidable in the felling of giant timbers, the rush of hewn limbs through the air, the uprush of spray as they strike the river currents. There is a quality, too, in the spreading of green lands flat to the blue horizon, the pearly skies of early morning, the bright translucence of hill water.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

*Critical Summary.*

*The criticism, made of this picture and of colour pictures in general, that the colour detracts from the value of the story is not altogether sound, for with one exception all Technicolor films have been notably weak in their stories. The exception, "A Star is Born," proved that, with a strong story, the colouring of the film becomes a secondary consideration in the mind of the audience.*

**Her place will be hard to fill . . . Jean Harlow in "Saratoga"**

## *The Show Goes On*

(Basil Dean—A.T.P.).

Gracie Fields, Owen Nares, John Stuart.

Perhaps, after all, Gracie Fields is such a supreme artist in her own right that the merit or demerit of her films is a trifling matter. Anyway, it is nice to think so. Here she is a Lancashire mill-hand who leaps to fame from the local pantomime chorus. A composer teaches her concert singing, which is a flop until she burlesques his songs, which wounds him deeply. He sails away and dies, but she makes good at Drury Lane, and there is a boy friend from the home town. Gracie's numbers are good, and she is now astonishingly groomed. She sings to a troopship from the Queen Mary and leads a spectacular finale with great spirit.

Homely domestic humour abounds, and Horace Hodges, John Stuart, Arthur Sinclair, Edward Rigby, and Amy Veness are well cast. Billy Merson had a brief role. I was sorry for Owen Nares, who, in a Vandyke beard, plays with gentle persuasiveness a composer of tunes which are unspeakably banal. There are some quite bad minor performances, and I wonder who will find the story convincing. But the whole thing has a slapdash breeziness of its own.

—P. L. Mannock, *The Daily Herald*

Gracie Fields pays a sentimental farewell to home-made movies and demonstrates once again how immeasurably superior as an artist she is to any film material she has yet been given.

Gracie is the mill-girl who makes good all over again here, but this time it is less of a frolic and more of a real life story. Parts of it are based on incidents in Gracie's own life. Apart from Gracie's unashamed sincerity, which gets away with dramatic murder, there are little things which give moments of a hackneyed story a sudden ring of truth. Gracie, with dark brown "wireless rings," a curl again, a wind-swept pierrot concert party at Colwyn Bay, the interminable train journeys of a third-rate music-hall tour. Moral seems to be that what seems easy at the Palladium to-day had a tough break getting by at the Rochdale Empire in 1926, even with Professor Augustino's sea-lions topping the bill. The Queen Mary just beats Owen Nares for second starring honours.

—Guy Morgan, *The Daily Express*

*Critical Summary.*

*Mr. Basil Dean and the English studios seem as far away as ever from solving the problem of Miss Gracie Fields. Here is the greatest money-making artiste of the screen, and no one is able to decide what to do with her. It seems impossible for them to transfer that exuberant personality to the screen in a story worthy of her undeniably great talent.*

**"King Solomon's Mines"**

## *On the Avenue*

(Roy del Ruth—20th Century-Fox.)

Dick Powell, Alice Faye, Madeleine Carroll.

The Avenue is Park Avenue, which is the Millionaires' Row of New York, and the story tells us how "the richest girl in the world" resents a parody of her home life in an impertinent revue. To get her revenge, the girl buys the revue, but love and doughnuts at a coffee stall lead to a fairly happy ending. Dick Powell gets better and better. He sings attractive Irving Berlin songs with tremendous success. But Dick is dissatisfied. He wants to play in a film in which he will not have to sing. He would like to play the sort of light comedy hero from whom Robert Montgomery is trying to escape. Anyhow, whether he succeeds in his ambition or not, *On the Avenue* is high-grade entertainment, with Dick at his best, with Alice Faye more likeable than in almost any of her previous films, and with Madeleine Carroll carrying off in style the part of the rich girl who runs away, at the well-known last minute, from a wedding with a bumptious explorer.

—Seton Margrave, *The Daily Mail*

*On the Avenue* is Chateau Hollywood '37. Irving Berlin has written four or five songs, Dick Powell, Alice Faye and Madeleine Carroll provide romance, and the three Ritz brothers are still trying harder than the Marx brothers, without much luck.

—Campbell Dixon, *The Daily Telegraph*

## *Talking Feet*

(John Baxter—U.K. Films.)

Hazel Ascot, Jack Barty.

If there is anyone now active in British film production who can put the authentic hall-mark of British character into a film, it seems to me that it is John Baxter. Not that *Talking Feet* is a great film in the sense some of us like to retain for "great" in a sphere notorious for its abuse of superlatives. But it is a good film: and I have seen none better for its alert and instinctive seizure of just those essentials in dialogue, stars, and minor types as well as in acting, which may be held to exemplify what, in screen art, is peculiarly and exclusively British. This is a comedy with an East End of London setting, and when Mr. Baxter has the camera pause briefly before a good, plain, eloquent Cockney face, we feel that it is such a face that all may understand, and here for a thrilling moment the British mood is fully revealed. It is the same with the market scenes. This could have developed into an excellent documentary of the East End of London. The shots are excellent in their lifelikeness. There is a rich, ripe sense of character, a relish for mordant wit, a salty tang in the atmosphere that the film engenders, and an honest homeliness in it all.

British film production need not fear Hollywood, nor lean upon Quotas or any other form of protection, if it can turn out any more successes like *Talking Feet*, even though it does make too many concessions to an old form of entertainment.

—*The Birmingham Mail*

## *Slave Ship*

(Tay Garnett—20th Century-Fox.)

Warner Baxter, Wallace Beery, Elizabeth Allen, Mickey Rooney.

*Slave Ship* harbors a crew of hardy fellows who make their living transporting blacks from the African coast to an illegitimate market on this side. Wallace Beery is the meanest, Mickey Rooney is the funniest, and Warner Baxter changes over about midway from callous to noble. His change is in character, however, for he meets Elizabeth Allen, and that is where the plot starts. All their goings-on are planted against the bloody career of a bad ship. Tay Garnett, who directed *China Seas* with such gusto, has shrewdly emphasised this phase of the story, and has given the Albatross a character so sturdy that the events aboard ship have a lot more meaning than they might otherwise have had. He has made a true spectacle of the slave scenes in the hold of the vessel, and the escape sequences when the ship nears St. Helena. This is by no means a *Mutiny on the Bounty* or a *Captains Courageous*. There is a certain superficial and unspectacular quality about most of it that throws the big scenes out of proportion. The characters are given little grooves to play in, and don't ever become people at all.

—Katherine Best, *Stage*

In a word, it is a colorful tale of the sea, with some breath-taking marine shots and a narrative that may tax your credulity but never your eyes. We wish though, that Mr. Zanuck's men would give up playing "Rule Britannia" every time the English are mentioned; it's getting to be almost as pat as an Amos and Andy theme song.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

## *Michael Strogoff*

(George Nicholls—RKO Radio.)

Anton Walbrook, Akim Tamiroff, Elizabeth Allen, Margot Grahame, Fay Bainter.

The Russian business is an old story now and has, I believe, been filmed several times. It originated from the pen of Jules Verne, a demoded writer who had two qualities which are now as rare as the bittern in ornithology or as the scent

of musk in a garden; he had imagination, and he knew how to tell a tale. *Michael Strogoff* has its absurdities, and it does not amount in all to anything more than a boy's thriller. But it has an irresistible momentum in its narration, and the vivid incidents so follow one another that it is quite impossible not to see the thing through to the horror of its climax and the relief of its ending. Away from the cinema, indeed, it can all be easily reduced to something like nonsense. Miss Grahame opens and closes her lovely eyes with an ecstasy of slowness and has no other expression whatsoever, except once when she falls flat on her back in a faint when a dancing bear gets out of hand. Elizabeth Allen is charming and Anton Walbrook has the temerity to act superbly throughout and to take absolutely everything with a burning-eyed seriousness. This last is a grand performance.

—James Agate, *The Tatler*

## *Dance Under the Gallows*

(Czecho-Slovakian.)

Palo Bielik.

Once in a long while a great film appears on the international screen, and *Dance Under the Gallows*, by general consent, is such a film. The scene of the story is Slovakia, and its hero is Janoshik, a peasant's son who once lived in the Carpathians and whose name is held in reverence by his countrymen of to-day for the part he played in the struggle of the serfs for liberation from the bondage in which they were held by the nobles. In *Dance Under the Gallows* Janoshik is a dashing Robin Hood, who lives with his band in the mountains and descends into the valleys to take from the nobles what they have taken from the peasants, restoring his booty to the original owners. The outstanding things about the film are the photography and the remarkable performances given in the main parts by unschooled players. Janoshik himself is played by a Slovak *gendarme*, M. Palo Bielik. The climax of the film is the last scene, when Janoshik, standing under the gallows, is granted his last wish—to hear the gypsies play for the last time the song he loves about the lime trees, and to dance to their music. This is a scene of rare dramatic quality; the whole film, indeed, by some method of chance is rare and refreshing. The figure of Janoshik, as played by M. Bielik, is unforgettable; and the Carpathians provide a romantic and lovely background.

—Vienna Correspondent, *The Times*

## *Mad Girl*

(Leo Joannon—French.)

Albert Prejean, Danielle Darrieux.

It would be difficult to find two more sharply differentiated performances than those of Mlle Darrieux in *Mayerling*, and of the same young lady in her present picture, wherein she gives a demonstration of shrill-voiced and prolonged tantrums. I treasure a fond memory of the grave and tender young Countess who offered the solace of her love to the tormented Rudolph, and would fain regard her tempestuous and tardily-tamed shrew as a flash in the pan. The plot of this petulant piece has been devised by Yves Mirande, who is, we are informed, the most successful comedy writer in France. The playwright has been content to rely on an exceedingly slight story, and labours the main situation beyond the limits of its humorous potentialities.

—Michael Orme, *The Sketch*

In the current effort Miss Darrieux races lightly up and down the histrionic keyboard, and flits with ease from passion to disillusion, thence to attempted suicide, and back to passion again, with an air of slightly satiric gaiety which suggests that nothing is really serious when you know it is funny. She is supported in a sophisticated way by Albert Prejean, Andra Roanne, and Lucien Baroux, who nearly steals the film at times, and the English captions rarely annoy. Whether Hollywood can do justice to this wistful and winsome Parisian girl remains to be seen, but remembering the experiences of Lilian Harvey I have qualms amounting to positive doubt.

—Paul Dehn, *The Sunday Referee.*

*Critical Summary.*

*It is sad that the memory of "Mayerling" should have been marred by the sight of Mlle Darrieux in such a very different role. We cannot criticise an actress for wishing to show her versatility, but we could have wished that if a change had to be made it might have been achieved a little less violently.*

## *The Thirteen*

(Mikhail Romm—Russian)

Ivan Novoseltsef, Helen Kuzmina, Alexei Tchistyakof, Arsen Fait.

*The Thirteen* is a dramatic Soviet sketch without the usual emphasis upon the Soviets' message to the world. It is a mere adventure story, an episode laid in the desert wastes of Central Asia, and reminds everyone who see it here of *The Lost Patrol.* I imagine I could list other films and stories it reminded me of, for *The Lost Patrol* itself seemed cast in a familiar pattern. I don't object to that in the least, for it is a good, sound pattern and I expect to see it often. The classic pattern, I might say, though *The Lost Patrol* departed from it, is to include a lady. Men without ladies seldom get lost. Upon the thirteen come the Afghanistan sand-storms, and then, soon enough, up turn the wicked Bashmachi, who are bandits. The resistance of the little troop to these Bashmachi is given with that power characteristic of Russian films. The subterfuges with which the thirteen besieged people foil the large hostile force, the means they take to suggest that they are a greater number than they actually are—such detail conveys to the spectator a sense of real desperation. Careful camera work, soldiers who look like soldiers, and a general expertness make the whole picture an honest and moving rendering of this particular model of crisis and adventure.

—John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

**"Yiddle with his Fiddle"**

## *Yiddle with his Fiddle*

(Joseph Green—Polish.)

Molly Picon.

*Yiddle with his Fiddle* was made by a Polish company in Warsaw, and has Yiddish dialogue with superimposed English titles. The prevailing fashions in movie plots have reached Warsaw too, so that we have Miss Molly Picon dressing up as a boy although her features and indeed her outlines are ill-suited to *Transvestismus*: nor are matters improved by her retention throughout the film of a Cupid's bow of lipstick. The hero, as usual, thinks her an awful mollycoddle and treats her rough until she emerges from her improbable chrysalis, when he instantly capitulates. All this takes place against a background of vagrant fiddling and Polish countryside and old Yiddish customs which is fresh and attractive. The picture is full of the ancient and unquenchable vitality of the Jewish race, overflowing into dark, abundant pools of melancholy, lawlessness, vulgarity and beauty.

—Christopher Shaw, *The Spectator*

A film from Poland is a rarity, and the rural and village settings are here not only interesting but also very artistically photographed. An artless story of strolling musicians (not always in synchronisation) has dialogue in Yiddish, with sub-titles in English, tinged with ill-advised American slang. Nothing much happens, but it keeps moving, and there are songs, all in a minor key, which I found slightly monotonous. Molly Picon, already known to Londoners, is a most vivacious screen personality—a sort of Hebraic Binnie Hale, with a fine range of comedy and pathos. She must be seen in another film. Why not star her, say, in *Gold Diggers of* 5698 ?

—P. L. Mannock, *The Daily Herald*

## DON'T LOOK NOW—BUT THERE'S A KNIFE IN YOUR BACK!

*Ritzi Nevel, Mexican dancer, fell in love with a knife-thrower in an El Paso night club. They married. At their first joint performance she carried on with her dancing, posing from time to time while sharp-edged knives whistled past her limbs. The first three knives took the audience's breath away. The fourth shaved Ritzi's toe. The fifth took it away altogether.*

*Ritzi is suing for divorce.*

*—News Item*

Don't fall in love with a knife-thrower, girls,
Let *that* kind of romance go by.
Better far Romeo-less
Than finger- or toe-less,
Better loveless than limbless, says I.
So don't fall in love with a knife-thrower, girls.
Give cutlery-chuckers the gate.
When the party's too quiet
He may be a riot,
But the place for a knife is the plate,
That's straight,
The place for a knife is the plate.

Don't fall in love with a knife-thrower, girls,
Let his glamour not go to your head,
Although he's so charming
He might be disarming
And then begin cutting you dead.
So don't fall in love with a knife-thrower, girls,
It can only mean trouble and strife;
However adoring
A husband gets boring
Who starts cutting chunks off his wife,
Oh, yes,
Even *very* small chunks off his wife.

## Sayings

"Anyone can dress as well as I do for about £2,600 a year."

*—Kay Francis*

"Keep your chin up and your hair waved."

*—Myrna Loy*

"Ugh! What a fog!"

*—Sonja Henie*

"I've got the sort of hair that squashes, so I gave up wearing hats."

*—Karen Morley*

"Now the buttons *are* off the Foyles," as the novelist said after the Literary Luncheon.

"I never miss an opportunity of sitting around or romping with Shirley Temple."

*—Trevor Wignall*

*Il faut souffrir être box-office*, Shirley.

"A triumph of miscasting."—Comment on Gable-Loy opus *Parnell* by biographer Joan Haslip.

## A little bit out of the Commons

A film was shown for the first time in the House of Commons recently.

Although the film was a documentary, this strikes us as the thin end of the wench, as the producer said when he tripped over Mae West's feet. In future the only questions asked in the House will be in the first house, when one of the back-benchers asks the member in front of him to remove his hat; and conversations such as the following will be everyday occurrences in the lobbies:

1*st Member:* What's on this afternoon, Aubrey?

2*nd Member:* Ooh, the loveliest film, called *Hell Bent for Election.*

1*st Member:* Do let's go! It's bound to be funnier than Mr. Chamberlain.

2*nd Member:* But it's Adults Only, Eric.

1*st Member:* Pooh! If Mr. Maxton can get in, we can.
(As they enter the darkened auditorium, Mr. Anthony Eden comes out of the ninepennies, sucking a toffee.)

2*nd Member:* Don't look now, old boy, but *did* you see how Tony is doing his hair these days?

1*st Member:* You know where he got *that* from. That's the way Ginger Rogers did her hair in that picture last week. The copycat!

2*nd Member:* And I looked in his brief-case yesterday and it was full of *World Film Newses.*

1*st Member: There's* a White Paper for you! (Advt.)

It looks, too, as if the old-fashioned Ugly Scene in the House will die out, to be replaced by a mild murmur of disapproval when Sir Stafford Cripps asks for his own, and everybody else's, money back.

## HAIR TO-DAY AND GONE TO-MORROW

According to an American hairdressing expert, some of the most attractive coiffures in the U.S.A. are those of Kay Francis, Miriam Hopkins, Ina Claire, Genevieve Tobin and Mary Boland.

Confident that the British head of hair can hold its own against allcomers, *World Film News* has gotten together a team which will knock any other collection of coiffures you like to mention, for a loop. The team includes: Hannan Swaffer, Godfrey Winn, Elizabeth Bergner, Alfred Drayton, Arthur Dent and a Mrs. Entwistle, *the local charlady, known to her friends as the Bermondsey Medusa.* We saw her let her back hair down last New Year's Eve, and, believe us, that baby's got what it takes. Wish them luck, folks!

## FASHION NOTES

Our favourite hysterical daily paper sent a Fashion Expert to take a gander at Sonja Henie as she stepped ashore in this neck of the woods last month. This is how the trained furbelow-fancier summed-up the Henie ensemble:—

*Cape:* Square-shouldered, in saffron yellow fine wool, lined crêpe-de-chine.

*Hat:* Felt Flemish bonnet to match, swathed with ginger brown chiffon.

*Dress:* Saffron crêpe, with ginger brown crêpe-de-chine trimmings.

*Shoes:* Crêpe-de-chine toeless sandals.

On her shoulder were £5 worth of purple orchids.

After reading this through once or twice to make sure we could believe our eyes, we dusted off our own Fashion Expert, who was lying quietly under the table hemming an old sock, and asked him why the heck he couldn't weigh in with something with a real news-slant like the above. The best he could do, however, was to get an interview with a big film executive in Wardour Street. Here is the *W.F.N.* Fashion Hawk's brilliant analysis of our average movie magnate's outfit:—

*Coat:* An old hacking-jacket from the Property Department, smothered in gravy-stains.

*Hat:* A rather fetching brimless bowler, worn off the forehead and swathed in mystery.

*Shirt:* Away at the races.

*Trousers:* Away at the seat.

*Shoes:* A pair of soleless sandals, cleverly made out of old scripts.

In his pocket were £5 worth of dud cheques.

## I think I'm going to faint

*Girl usherettes at* 220 *cinemas throughout Britain are to don gas-masks and learn how to control audiences and prevent panic during air-raids. They will be taught how to dress wounds and protect their patrons from gas.*

*—News Item*

Looks as if the girls will get plenty of practice without waiting for the first gas-attacks, due any moment now. Any quota quickie is sufficient to induce the symptoms of gas-poisoning in an audience—choking, coughing, running at the eyes, rushing at the exits, and sharp bursts of hollow, mirthless laughter. And as for wounds, the usherettes can always keep their hand in by tending patrons suffering from dislocated jaws brought on by yawning at British bedroom farces; injured pride resulting from Hollywood portrayals of the typical Englishman; and outbreaks of itching fingers brought on by Shirley Temple.

To say nothing of violent attacks of reaching for the hat brought on by the Organ Interlude.

# LORUM

## Away from it all, or That's what you think

The papers announce a new murder,
The victim was cut up like ham;
A man has been crushed by a girder,
A woman's had twins in a tram.
A financier's leapt from a liner,
A girl has been gassed in a flat,
The state of the City is not very pretty,
Mr. Eden has bought a new hat.

*So let us all go to the pictures,*
*Forgetting such horrors can be;*
*Yes, let us all go to the pictures,*
*And what do you think we shall see?*

We'll see just the loveliest murders,
All gems of the movie-man's craft,
With marital ructions, attempted seductions,
Extortion and blackmail and graft;
There'll be brawling and shooting and drinking
Our poor sluggish bloodstreams to chill,
And we settle down tightly and lap it up nightly
Even when there's one of those travel pictures with an American commentary in the bill.

## I KISS YOUR LITTLE HAND, MR. KORDA

It is reported that America's women want a more intimate greeting than a handshake.

According to Max Factor, Hollywood make-up expert, the "hand-kiss" is the solution. Real kisses, he says, spoil make-up.

Joan Crawford is said to have described the hand-kiss as a "very beautiful greeting." Marlene Dietrich says: "Charming, if the 'kisser' knows how."

Feeling that this touches only the fringe of the subject, *W.F.N.* sent their Hand-Kiss Editor, a wicked old relic from the Regency days, to try and get one or two of our British film personalities (we gave him a list of all three) to loosen up on the question of this novel form of greeting. His first despatch, which has just reached us from Vine Street, reads as follows:—

*Isidore Ostrer:* "Ever so nice, but isn't it rude!"

*Jeffrey Bernerd:* "I am continually having my hand kissed, but never by anybody I know."

*Arthur Dent:* "It does soil one's gloves so."

*Alfred Hitchcock:* "I never feel it."

*Tommy Farr:* "Try kissing mine."

*Alexander Korda:* "I never allow it. I might get snake-bite."

Snooks Grieser, W.F.N.'s repulsive lift-boy, who tried to kiss Miss Lejeune's hand in a weak moment, is in bed with a broken nose.

## LINES TO SOME LADIES

Anna Neagle
Has gone all reagle.

Annabella
Makes a fella
Just a little bit Fonda,
And no wonda.

With Madeleine Carroll,
I have no quarroll.

Carole Lombard
Can be nombard
Among the blondes
With whom I should like to hold hondes.

Kay Francis
Knows all the ancis.

Irene Dunne
Is lots of funne.

Barbara Stanwyck
Is often volcanwyck.

Martha Raye
Is a little *too* gaye.

Vivien Leigh
Is O.K. with meigh.

Than Luise Rainer
There is nobody fainer.

## As Others See Us

*Recent developments in the B.B.C. autumn television programme include transmissions from film studios. Viewers will be taken through a complete course on how films are made, how scenes are shot, how stars work, what they eat in the restaurant, what the directors look like in action.—News Item.*

"Yes, dear, those are the stars having lunch. No, they don't eat very nicely, do they? They're rather out of practice. The director? He's *under* the table."

## Songs for the Stars

*With Plenty of Muni and You*
*Arliss, Where Art Thou?*
*It's a Sin to Tell a Loy.*
*Mae Little Grey Home in the West.*

## THOUGHTS FOR TO-DAY

An unnaturally solemn youth
Is Freddie Bartholomewth.

"Not Balalaika-ly," as Eric Maschwitz said when asked if he regretted leaving the B.B.C.

**"*Now* do you take back what you said about Shirley Temple?"**

# A Wide-open Letter to Mr. Gerald Sanger,

## Production Chief of British Movietonews.

For the second time, Glen Norris turns the spotlight of candid and constructive criticism on to the British Newsreels. W.F.N. does not necessarily endorse the opinions expressed in this article on the newsreel affiliated to the American Twentieth Century-Fox Organisation.

Dear Mr. Producer Sanger,

This letter should really be addressed to your "official" Editor—Sir Malcolm Campbell. I am sure he will understand my reasons for not doing so. His interests cover such a wide field of science, engineering, sport, and journalism, that for him to be just a full-time routine newsreel editor, would be a shameful waste of his valuable talents. I know that he does sometimes edit and commentate Movietonewstories. But I realise that his title as Editor of the general reel is practically nominal. That leaves you as the power behind the Movietone throne.

### Gigantic Machine

In your case, "power" is an appropriate word. The newsreel machine upon which you ride is among the world's largest, most efficient. Behind you always, like the slave of Aladdin's lamp, you have the vast organisation of Movietonews of America, which, even allowing for U.S. journalistic exaggeration, is generally regarded as the "giant among the world's newsreels." It swims in the money provided by the enormously successful Twentieth Century-Fox companies. It is the only newsreel that literally covers the world with its own cameramen, speckling the globe like a heat rash. Everywhere outside Britain, you share the service of this tremendous organisation. No matter how obscure the place where a story breaks, you probably have a "staff" man within comparatively short range. In such emergency circumstances, almost any other reel would have to rely on a hastily hired freelance, of doubtful technical ability, with even more doubtful equipment.

Seldom a week passes without some evidence in your reel of the power of your world-wide links in the news camera chain. After more than a year of the Spanish war, when almost every other newsreel has decided that "to forget" is cheaper (for cameramen daily risking their lives, expect to be paid!)—British Movietone continues to bring to the screen weekly proof that its cameras are still turning on all that futile horror. Few other reels can claim to bring so many stories from India and the Far East—except of course Gaumont-British, which shares your foreign material—and a striking feature of some of your recent stories on "Japan versus China," have been the voices of the Chinese and Japanese generals, proving that your sound units even roam the China Seas.

### American Influence

Movietonews of America lends you its cameramen—it also largely controls your production policy. In doing so, it has given your reel certain features which I consider to represent the most advanced newsreel technique. A few of them: *You use several commentators—varying the voice to suit the mood of the story.* Properly carried out, I regard that as the best solution to date of the problem of newsreel commentary. *Instead of using separate titles at the start of each story, you print your wording over the first scene, then fade it out.* I believe that system would be even better if the title could first be definitely clearly read against a black background—the picture then fading up behind the title, before the latter disappeared. Thus there would never be the possibility that the picture might distract attention from the title, and there would be a more definite break between stories. But even in its present form, I regard your system as an improvement on that of any other British reel, as bringing a smoother flow to your make-up, a more definite link between title and commentary. *I am enthusiastic about your system of grouping your newstories under such general titles as: Sport, Personalities, Royalty.* It makes for less sudden jumps from the sublime to the silly, from funerals to fireworks. *I admire your frequent use of optical printing tricks—fades, wipes, mixes, one picture superimposed on another.* The modern newsreel has to cram so much into every hundred feet, that many a bad jump, many a loose connection between one picture and the next, cannot be avoided. But they can almost be hidden by a right use of optical printing tricks—while many an idea can be hammered home by a clever trick, which surprises the cinemaudience into a few seconds of absolute concentration.

But perhaps the most important parallel between you and your American namesake, is in the lavishness of your equipment and staff. You send six cameramen out on a story which your rivals might try to cover with two. You have so many sound units, you send them about in pairs. Your pans are always a little bit smoother. Your lenses always seem to bring the great faces just a little bit nearer. Your camera angles, your cloud effects, betray the expert technicians, using the finest tools. Everything about you, even your Main Title, is just a bit bigger and louder than the others.

It sounds grand on paper, doesn't it? You sit at the switch board of a machine that hums with smooth efficiency, that vibrates with controlled power, that is hooked to a world "grid." The machine will do its job superbly, *if the switches are set right!* But in my view, British Movietonews does not do full justice to its machine—and the fault lies in the manipulation of the production controls.

### The Voice that Hurts

Commentary is not the most important factor in newsreel production. But any frank discussion of British Movietone's faults, leads automatically to its commentators as a starting point. I have already said that U.S. Movietone has adopted a basic principle of commentating that is perhaps the ideal system. Yours is an exact copy of that system. But inasmuch as it fails completely to understand the American basic principle—by that much, your commentating is the worst fault of British Movietonews.

The American basic principle: that no single voice can cover the full range of human emotions as reported in a newsreel—that therefore there should be a different voice for each type of story—*but that each voice must have its own distinct personality, instantly recognizable from all the others.* Thus U.S. Movietone confounds the critics who say that the cinemaddict likes to get to know one voice. In the U.S., he can still get to know his favourite voice—because no one can fail to differentiate between the slow drama of Lowell Thomas, or the smooth speed of Ed Thorgersen, or the comic sing-song of Lew Lehr.

### "Average" British Voices

But on this side of the Atlantic, your voices are all "average" British. Apart from the ladies and the comedians, not one is definitely easily recognizable. Not one has a strongly defined vocal personality. Not one is definitely identified with a certain mood, with drama or tragedy, with heavy plodding or light tripping. At least three of your voices suffer from what the B.B.C. calls the "Oxford Accent"—and badly enough to provoke open jeers in certain parts of the country. A few months ago, I happened to see your Boat Race story in a tiny Lancashire village hall. The event of the evening was the derisive roar that greeted your commentator's: "Ah expect you reahlahs that ahm an Oxford man mahself." Perhaps not quite so bad as that spelling looks—but nearly! At least two of your voices imagine that to convey excitement they must shout—and one forces his voice up to such a strained high pitch, that I once heard him described in the row behind me as "the voice that hurts."

I am convinced, that to a large number of cinemagoers, your commentaries are bad enough actually to *detract* from the interest of fine photography. That does not prevent me from believing that the U.S. Movietone multi-voice idea is the nearest I know to the newsreel ideal. But as for your interpretation of it, I vote for a new-deal!

(*A Wide-open Letter.....continued*)

### Lack of Unified Control

Not only your voices, but the stories they have to tell, are mostly dull. The ideas they try to express are generally obscured by vocal padding. The jokes they try to put over are often forced and foolish. The reason: although you are far ahead in other ways, you still stick to the old fashioned system of writing commentaries to fit previously cut pictures. You still try to tell the story on the screen, then add a vocal accompaniment on the sound track. No wonder your stories hobble along, to the rhythm of Laurel and Hardy's signature tune. Modern American technique is almost the complete reverse of your system. They tell the story in a fast moving commentary, illustrate it with exciting shots. Every foot of film, every word of commentary, that doesn't pull its full weight, is ruthlessly cut, Hence the breathless speed, which is so obviously lacking in your reel. I feel that the first step towards achieving it, in your case, would be a more unified control over the various production departments. At present, there seem to be so many different men sticking a finger in the make-up pie—certain items edited by yourself, others by Sir Malcolm Campbell, yet others by executive boss Tommy Scales—script-writers hurriedly viewing pictures, to write rush commentaries that fit by accident more than by design—commentators reading material that they have hardly had time to assimilate—news editor Ivan Scott tearing from his executive desk, to speak commentaries, while his mind wrestles with some big outside problem. All these, and others, combine badly enough to give to your finished reel a patchwork effect that prevents it from taking its place among the world's best.

### One Man

My remedy: a place in your organisation for one man, who would combine something of the work of a chief cutter, and a script-writer. One man, who, as each story was passed to him for make-up, would visualise ahead its new value, the best method of presentation, the type of commentating voice for that presentation. Who would then write a commentary in the best style for the available voice, would cut the picture in such a way that not a shot is included that could not be better left to a vocal description, not a word spoken over a shot strong enough to tell its own story. You may already have such a man in your organisation, you may have to go out and find him. But when you do, and give him the freedom and power he will need for his work of unification, I foresee a transformation in the audience impact of British Movietonews. I see now a reel that has tremendous possibilities, because of its almost unique newsgathering power. It only requires a reform in a somewhat inefficient production policy, to turn that power loose on the screen, with possibly surprising results.

Sincerely yours,

**GLEN NORRIS**

# NEWSREEL NOTES

## BY THE COMMENTATOR

TIME and again the world's newspapers have demonstrated their power to wield the battle-axe of public opinion—to set millions clamouring for some obscure political reform, screaming against some once popular figure. Through the years the press has built up a tradition of ever growing effectiveness as a mould of public opinion; a tradition of which the newsreels may well be envious.

1937 may well go down as the year when, for the first time, a newsreel started a national wave of indignation; was used by a government department as its star witness in an important political issue. The reel: U.S. Paramount News. The government department: The U.S. Committee on Civil Liberties. The issue: The Chicago riot between police and labour, in which the final score was: 10 dead, 40 wounded by bullets, 60 beaten.

When Paramount cameraman Orlando Lippert hung around outside Chicago's Republic Steel Works instead of joining his rivals at the Indianapolis car races, he secured some of the most harrowing pictures ever taken of a police *v.* labour battle that turned into a massacre. (See *W.F.N.* for August.) The pictures were at once confiscated by the Civil Liberties Committee, commissioned to investigate charges of police brutality, said to be conclusively proved by the Paramount shots. A few days later a few of the less bloody scenes were shown in this country by British Paramount. Meanwhile America shouted to be shown the film, talked of little else.

At the Committee hearing, through days of stinging anti-police testimony, a huge screen and projector in the Senate room showed that the newsreel was to be the final climax. At last the room was darkened—700 faces strained forward. The complete film was shown at normal speed—the worst scenes repeated at half speed—with now and then a stop, to let a telling close-up sink in.

Finally the Committee came to the conclusion that the film *did not prove* that the police had fired without provocation, but *did prove* that the provocation had not justified the extreme brutality used, *i.e.*, that tear gas would have served as effectively as guns and clubs. Also concluded the Committee, taking its cue largely from the film: "Treatment of the injured was characterised by the most callous indifference to human life and suffering. Wounded prisoners of war might have expected and received greater solicitude."

As soon as the Committee had seen the film, it was released to the clamouring cinemas, Paramount explaining that the national indignation had now cooled. That they were only partly right, was daily proved by the hisses, boos, and shouts, that almost everywhere greeted the close-ups of the dead, dying and wounded. The film was at once banned in Chicago by a far from remorseful officialdom, which was preparing to prosecute 65 bystanders and others who were arrested during the riot. Chicago's Mayor announced that an "unbiased jury of local citizens" had just found *for* the police, with a verdict of "justifiable homicide." On press enquiry, the jury was found to be composed of unemployed members of The American Legion. But it was neither this report, nor any other, that had really aroused the American public. It was the *sight* and *sound* of the Paramount newsreel.

### Marxian Newsreel!

The fact that a film called *A Day at the Races* should deal mostly with days in a sanatorium, an evening at a water carnival, and a night in a bedroom, is just another tribute to the madcap versatility of the Marx Brothers. But the film's craziest of climaxes is finally set round a racecourse. To build up a suitable four-legged atmosphere, to put across the idea that tens of thousands are waiting for the big race, to kid us that this is a real-life meeting and no studio set, is the problem solved by M.G.M. in masterly fashion. In roughly 100 feet of film there flashes on to the screen a series of brilliantly angled close-ups, of crowded stands, of tipsters, of jockeys, of everyone and everything, each shot mixing into the next, *but not one longer than three or four feet*. Meanwhile a brassy band plays a fast stepping march. There is little or no attempt to use synchronised sound. The total effect of this quite short sequence is extraordinary. It takes the cinemaddict right out of his seat, and into the picture. After seeing it, he waits for the Marxian antics, and no amount of far-fetched fooling can detract from the reality of that racecourse.

Here surely is a lesson to the newsreels. Points for their note-books: **(1)** An enormous number of different angles gives the impression of vivid detail to the scene. **(2)** Short shots hold the interest, and prevent that "I wonder how they took this" feeling. **(3)** Interesting angles, and a carefully worked out sequence of shots, *can be completely* successful in building up atmosphere, even in a newsreel length. **(4)** Strong, rhythmic music completes the illusion, does not need much help from "general" sound. **(5)** It is quite hopeless to expect to be able to make up such a sequence from the haphazard shooting of, say, half a dozen cameramen at the Derby. The only way is to shoot to a minutely worked out script—or to treat the pre-race build-up as a library story, using the best shots of the last ten years and adding a few more shots to the pool each year. So why doesn't some reel start preparing a sequence now, to be tacked on to the front of next year's Grand National? If it were edited as well as the Marxian newsreel, there'd be sensation in Wardour Street!

GLAMOROUS

# SWITZERLAND

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# LETTERS

## Pabst Pipe Dream

Your article "Pipe Dreams of London and Hollywood" reminds me of a film which G. W. Pabst wanted to make for Paramount.

The action of the story takes place on cruise, when people of all nationalities are on board the same ship, dancing, playing, dining together. News comes by wireless: war has started in Europe. The passengers on board divide into groups—into their respective countries. Hatred for their enemies—who five minutes ago were their friends—boils in their blood. There is shouting and fighting, anger and bitterness. Even a married couple, husband from one country, wife from another, quarrel and part. . . . an orphan boy with Italian father and Austrian mother is neglected and despised. Then word comes that the alarm had been false, that the ship's wireless operator, shell-shocked during the war, has a nervous obsession . . . he was repeating what he had heard so often. "Thousands dead . . . thousands dead."

The subsequent shame and humiliation of the passengers was the moral of the film.

This story was too pacificatory for Mr. Hayes. Pabst shot *A Modern Hero* instead. Just another pipe dream. . . .

LOTTE EISNER

## Music-Hall and Melodrama

Mr. John Grierson is right to point to the music-hall as British films' only contact with the "common people across the footlights." But he might have added a word for another part of our show-world which has its roots as deeply as the music-hall. I refer to the Melodrama.

To critics the stage always was and is the West End, and 'Maria Marten' melodrama something to laugh at or to ignore. There was something ignoble in the guying of melodrama in the West End a few years ago when Mr. Tod Slaughter and his Company were taken from the doomed Elephant and Castle, where they had for years thrilled and entertained real people, to be the mock and amuse of the West End sophisticates.

Hundreds of thousands of people had laughed and cried over these old plays, had laughed and cheered, had been terrified and thrilled, as they have never been by modern plays. These plays were real enough to evoke storms of boos and cheers: even to make playing the villain an uncomfortable business—I know of a case many years ago where the man playing a particularly villainous role in one town was unable to walk the streets in safety.

Modern drama, particularly modern propagandist drama, has never re-captured this power over the audience. The movies did in their early days—again partly through the use of the melodrama and melodramatic methods—and even now make their strongest impression through gangster pictures. Mr. George Arliss, I am convinced, owes his popularity to the fact that he is essentially the creature of melodrama, almost the last of a long and honoured line. And can he pack them in!

Hitchcock owes his success to the fact that he tries to make melodramas. But he has never really moved and thrilled people, not in the way that the old melodramas did, for example. Hitchcock had to use the tricks of the movies to keep the attention of his audience. His is West End stuff, it is sophisticated. West End accent, West End posturing and mincing, West End la-de-da talk and thinking and underacting—these have ruined the theatre and are well on the way to ruining the British cinema as well. Hitchcock is stuffed full of this and his thrillers cry aloud—"this is absurd, really, it's to laugh at," and melodrama cannot be made by sophisticated chuckles.

British films will never touch greatness until they learn to be of the audience, as were the music-halls and the melodramas. You cannot make a film native to this country by adding a few shots of sheep grazing on a hill, or by hiring a few real workmen for an hour in the studios. Great drama is of the crowd, built out of the emotions, living and speech of the crowd.

CHARLES WHARTON

## Can Films help the Appreciation of Poetry?

It has been suggested that Keats's "Ode to Autumn," and particularly the second stanza, might be most effectively explained by a series of pictorial images in a classroom film of the poem. What a situation is contemplated! All over England boys and girls will have thrust upon them an authoritative, standardised set of harvest scenes which they must accept as being "what the poet saw". To quote the author of the article referred to: "The whole poem is a series of mental images, and it is important that the pupil should himself have in his own mind the images the poet had in his when the verses were written."

The mass-produced "explanation" in the poetry lesson will indeed be a new portent. A poem is not a blue print with one exact precise meaning about which there can be no two opinions; it may, on the contrary, bear several interpretations, in which case it is not for any teacher—or film producer—to foist his interpretation upon every child within range. The teacher should foster wealth and variety of interpretation rather than precise uniformity.

Moreover, Keats's poem suggests not only visual images, but also, for example, such sensations as that of drowsiness on a warm Autumn afternoon, and these can as well be suggested by words as by pictures that give only the outward behaviour of someone experiencing those feelings. In fact, the filming of a poem is almost certain to encourage an undue emphasis on one element of the poem—its pictorial content. What of the rhythm, rhyme, vowel melody, onomatopoeia—all those elements that are essentially verbal? It may be replied that the teacher need not give up the whole of the time to the film; but he will certainly find it difficult to resist the temptation and to preserve a proper balance in his lesson.

And there still remains the problem of the exact place at which the film should come in. If it is shown at the beginning, the audience will see the pictures first and only gradually, at later viewings, become aware of the poem itself, which they will then try to link up with the pictures. That will be making the poem a commentary upon the film, instead of the reverse. The *poem* is the thing, and it becomes really part of our experience only if, by effort, we try to take the poet's meaning direct from his own words. The only possible place for a film would be at the end of the usual lesson when the class, having already attempted to appreciate the poem, might as a matter of interest, compare their own impressions with those of the film.

W. E. JARRETT, M.A.

## Amsterdamit

Boys do it; girls do it. Ivens did it several times. Storck almost does it. You know what *it* is of course. *It* is the Amsterdam (or Rotterdam or Dontgiveadam) film which trickles out of Holland into the Film Society programmes, year in, year out. It is the spice of the Film Society programme. You see it four Sundays out of five. It always gets applause. It is quaint. It is human. It is TRUE.

Those narrow quaint streets with people in them. Those so quaint peaky roofs, those daringly modern factories. And then lots and lots of people on bicycles. And canals and barges. And that windmill on the outskirts of the town. And those funny workers (so different from you and me, poor things), who hang out washing. And those funny trams.

Then there is the man playing the concertina. And a girl looking at a boy on a seat. And just a teeny hint of two sailors dancing together.

And then the camera shakes a bit. And it dashes up and down towers. Then, flick, flick, and there's a picture by Van Dyck, but not long enough to see it properly (sometimes you only see the frame).

Then it rains. Tiddle, tiddle go the raindrops in the puddles. The Dutch—the funnies—put up umbrellas. And those women in those delicious old costumes take arms and run for shelter.

And now for the great moment. The peak. The crux. The nadir. Do you know it? Can you guess? It's that newspaper floating by in a puddle. Ah, life is very sad. We are all pieces of paper, drifting by on life's stream. That is *The Amsterdam Film.*

The truth has now been horribly brought home to me. I have taken an hour's walk in the fine and dignified city of Amsterdam. Just a tripper's walk with an hour to spare between appointments. I have seen the raw material of *The Amsterdam Film.* And a horrid deception has been unmasked. *The Amsterdam Film* is just a tripper's film. It could have been made by you, me, or the next man, whether we knew the language or not, after a morning's preparation with a guide book.

The Dutch documentary directors acting, no doubt, with every pretension of sensibility and snootiness, have a tripper's view of their own beautiful country, beautiful not because of its quaint heirlooms, but because of a living, pulsating, modern life against an architectural background which has been tactfully absorbed into the twentieth century.

Amsterdamit, let us one day see the real Holland on the screen.

ARTHUR ELTON

# American Radio Commentary

THE AUTHOR OF THIS ARTICLE, THOMAS BAIRD, HAS JUST RETURNED FROM THE U.S.A., WHERE FOR SIX MONTHS HE HAS STUDIED FILM AND RADIO. THIS ARTICLE WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A SERIES DEALING WITH DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF AMERICAN FILM AND RADIO.

Even a cursory glance at American radio throws up fundamental differences from English policy and technique. Some of these are directly traceable to the sponsorship basis of the United States system. American radio has money. It can pay for talent, it can pay for producers, it can afford experiments on a scale denied to the B.B.C. On the other hand, it must serve the majority audience most of the time. When you are selling 10-cent tooth-paste, you cannot afford to talk to a few; you must get the millions. United States Broadcasting therefore plays the Hollywood game. Entertainment of the best and brightest nature fills the most important listening hours. Statistics show the twelve most popular items to be variety turns. The Jack Bennies, the Gracie Allens, the Eddie Cantors and the like get the popular vote. Talks, in the popular estimation, are far down the list. The first talk holds about thirtieth place; *March of Time* about fiftieth.

* * * *

America wants fun on the radio and she gets it. She also wants music, and she gets it. Plenty! Sunday in New York has more good music than the B.B.C. provides in the week. America finds the day to day world interesting and there is a steady demand for news—not merely news bulletins, but editorial treatment of the news. Daily, a series of commentators discuss the news of the world. It is more than reporting; it is public discussion; it is criticism. Out of this has arisen the journalistic race to chase the topical event. Commentators pray that the catastrophe will occur ten minutes before they come on the air.

* * * *

This demand for topicality and for the informed comment on the news brings the commentator into actual contact with the news as it is being made. H. V. Kaltenborn, radio news commentator, gave his impressions of a tour through rebel Spain, in a broadcast from Paris, over the Columbia net-work. Last year he made the first broadcast of the actual course of a battle when he took his microphone across the French border and brought to America the eye-witness' account of the fighting between the Spaniards. The detonation of exploding shells added a dramatically real touch to the broadcast.

During the devastating floods at the beginning of this year the radio commentators kept an anxious public informed of events in the stricken area, as well as moving in to direct much of the rescue work. Occasionally, the journalist's sixth sense takes a man to the right place at the right time, as it took one N.B.C. commentator to Lakehurst the day the Hindenburg exploded. The cosy atmosphere of thousands of American drawing-rooms was that day chilled by the description of the scene as the burning ship crashed to the ground.

* * * *

The free discussion of politics on the air leads to some anomalous situations. While the B.B.C. kept their dignified silence on the abdication, British journalists and statesmen sat in London and discussed the situation with the American public over U.S. networks.

* * * *

Unlike the B.B.C., the United States companies plan topical programmes from day to day. This flexibility is carried as far as scrapping an advertised concert or a play on short notice, so that a topical event can be brought to listeners. A few hours after Marconi died, American companies were paying tribute in memorial programmes, which dramatised the life of the man who made radio practical reality. *The March of Time* is the high light of this type of topicality. Vivid treatment of the news of the week, with re-enacted episodes, is a sound contribution to America's criticism of things as they happen. Historical perspective, dramatisation and actuality, focus attention on the growing points of America's life.

* * * *

So important has this dramatic technique become that *Columbia Broadcasting System* has set aside a department to study and experiment with new sound techniques. This department, the *Columbia Work-Shop*, directed by Irving Reis, is contributing the most outstanding research in the radio's dramatic possibilities. Reis, once a radio engineer, adds to a deep working knowledge of radio technique an intelligent sense of drama. Most of his work exploits the peculiar qualities of the radio medium. Every week he presents programmes which experiment with radio drama as a new technique. His programmes have included adaptations of short stories, original plays, instructive interpretations of the nature of radio, dramatic news, history and Shakespearean adaptations—every one significant, not so much for the content as for their experimental radio approach. His work has repaid his labour and the freedom which *Columbia* has allowed him, for much of his technique is passing into the day to day programmes. His technical knowledge has given him the advantage of being able to plan his effects in terms of the very stuff of radio.

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One of Reis' outstanding feature programmes this Spring was the production of an original verse play written by Archibald McLeish, one of America's best known contemporary poets.

McLeish has now turned his hand to the radio adaptation of Shakespeare. In an interview he compares his task to that of "digging a great structure out of the rubbish of a lesser city built above it, and seeing at last the pure and noble contours of the old walls." His attitude is an interesting one even to us well-accustomed to the Shakespearean productions of the B.B.C. It is calculated that an American audience is not prepared to listen to a two-hour broadcast. McLeish is facing this situation by adaptation. He explains his procedure and ideal thus: "*Lear* is, of course, the worst of the tragedies so far as plot is concerned, if the greatest for pure poetry. It has as many sub-plots as the most entangled of the comedies. What I have tried to do is to free the drama of *Lear* from all the other twists of the thread, letting the Narrator tell whatever is necessary to know of Edmund's loves and Gloucester's miseries. The result is the loss of one great passage (the scene at the cliff). But unless I am wildly wrong this loss is more than repaired and over-balanced by the gain in consecutiveness of the tragedy of Lear himself.

"But it is not only for this reason that I have been excited by the work," McLeish continued. "I have tried very hard to make of this version something more than an adaptation for radio. I have tried to make of it a radio play. I believe that radio is peculiarly fitted to carry great works of imagination of which *Lear* is surely one of the greatest. I have therefore attempted throughout to give those suggestions of sound which will enable the imaginations of hearers to fill in the background of the scenes.

"These suggestions, moreover, I have attempted to use in such a way as to hold the whole play together in its present cut form, creating a kind of matrix of imagined background against which the scenes of the action may take their places. Above all, I have tried to give the Narrator's voice a background of sound so that the hearer will never feel that the action has stopped but rather that the action continues in the background while the Narrator speaks. In this way the Narrator may become part of the play instead of an interruption to it."

# RADIO

## Notes of the Month

### by George Audit

THERE is no excuse for flat programmes even in holiday times. Only a minority of the eight million listeners are away on leave at any given time during the summer and there must be quite a few millions of poor and unemployed folk who get no holiday at all. Therefore, during this period when small houses are often unbearably hot and counter-attractions are at a low ebb one might reasonably expect to hear brighter programmes.

What changes do the B.B.C. make for their summer output. Sunday programmes are practically unaltered. There are no big series of talks. There are more light (and less expensive) orchestral programmes. Feature programmes, plays, and star variety shows are suspended.

Programme expenditure is lowest in the summer months. The nightly relay of Promenade concerts through August and September is a blessed release for programme builders.

Now I believe that this policy is based on an entire misconception. The B.B.C. assumes that most people are away or out-of-doors in summer. There are obviously fewer listeners during these months but those who remain do not spend all their evenings walking around the streets and are not so contented that they can dispense with the entertainment for which they have paid.

The following analysis of the composition of Sunday programmes for July is interesting.

11 broadcasting hours are made up of:—

- 2¾ hours of religious items;
- 3¾ hours of classical and chamber music;
- 3¼ hours of light music;
- 1 hour of talks.

Nobody objects to church services being broadcast for those who want them and there is probably just about the right amount of classical music, but where is the alternative "lighter" programme of which we have heard so much. Taking Sunday, July 18th, as fairly representative you find that two religious services lasting 1¾ hours altogether were broadcast in both programmes simultaneously. To the six items of heavy music there were the following alternatives:

(1) none; (2) none; (3) a quintet; (4) talk and a band; (5) talk; (6) light music.

Only items 4 and 6 can be called alternative programmes.

The best broadcast variety this summer has been entirely arranged and produced by someone outside the B.B.C. I have in mind the series of Radio Rodeos, presented by that versatile organist, Harold Ramsay. Quite a feat in these programmes has been regular performances on the cinema organ by leading players which have succeeded in pleasing without blowing your eardrums in or giving you the quivers in the stomach. Harold Ramsey has sustained such a high level of comedy (judged by ordinary broadcasting standards) that I should say he could dispense with his setting "Under the Texas evening sky, at home on the range," which has nothing to do with the comedy anyway, and I have always imagined a Texas ranch as rather a hot place in August.

There were eleven relays of concert parties from seaside resorts during the past season. The idea was a good one and two of the few I heard were quite entertaining. Unfortunately each party put on a special show for the broadcast which made it indistinguishable from a studio concert, so that any impression of being beside the seaside was lost. For the benefit of those of us who sweat in towns I should like to hear something more characteristic of the seaside. Strolling minstrels, funfairs, beach games, fortune tellers, and the sounds of the water could surely be woven into a pattern that would call up pleasant memories of past holidays.

* * *

As a clearing house for news and information the B.B.C. carries a heavy responsibility. This summer foreign news has taken a permanent seat on the front page of all balanced newspapers. Events in Spain, China, America and Russia have sent newshawks scuttling round the world and back to satisfy the enormous public appetite for "the truth behind the headlines." News films galore have come from the front lines. Confused by partisan exaggerations the public has turned to the B.B.C. for information, for the truth about what is going on over the horizon.

The B.B.C.'s response to that appeal has been scandalous. They have sent no observers to Spain or China. They have broadcast nothing from the scenes of action. Except for a local talk to Welsh listeners by D. R. Grenfell the other day, there have been no eye witness accounts. There has been only the bare recital of claims and counter-claims occupying a few minutes of the news bulletin. Occasionally a home observer is called into the studio to give his impressions, as was Sir Bernard Pares on the Russian trials.

The B.B.C. will give you a first-hand impression of a Tattoo or air manœuvres but they will not deliver any direct information on political events. They prefer agency reports because they thus escape responsibility for what they say. Imagine the *March of Time* presenting a picture of some aspect of life in England by means of interviews with Press Association officials. That is what the B.B.C. is doing. A tape machine is exciting in comparison.

# BOOK REVIEWS

## *Soviet Arts*

"In Western Europe and North America film art has not been able to keep pace with technical progress. In the Soviet Union the exact opposite was the case. Mind made a mock of the machine. The first world successes of the Soviet Films were produced under such primitive conditions that it seems almost a miracle when we look at the results."

So writes Kurt London (*Seven Soviet Arts*, Faber and Faber, 15*s*.), an admirer of the early works of the three great creators of the artistic film in the U.S.S.R., Pudovkin, Eisenstein and Dovshenko.

Changing conditions and opinions in Russia have pushed these three into the background, according to London. He fears that the great period of Soviet Films is ended.

The newer films have "lost the characteristic impress" which marked the earlier works, are not much more than "diluted editions of earlier standard works, or even bad imitations of Western types."

Describing himself as "one of that almost extinct race of men who stand with one foot in the century of liberalism," Kurt London surveys Soviet Art—Music, Literature, Theatre, Opera, the Ballet, Architecture, Radio and Film—and, though unhappy about the compulsory enforcement of the ideology of the ruling group on all forms of artistic expression, has nothing but praise for the cultural achievements of the Soviet Union in general.

"A judgment on the Soviet Union without knowledge of the cultural activities of the country must be incomplete or even erroneous. . . . For our Western culture, which prides itself so much on its high level, should at least learn from the Soviets what organisation can do to make art available to the people."

Kurt London's book should help many more to learn of the work and achievements of the Soviet Union in bringing literacy and a wider culture to the masses.

C.

## *Indispensable Reference Book*

Among the many useful features in this year's issue of *The Motion Picture Almanac* is the Who's Who, occupying 845 pages out of the Almanac's 1,342, and containing over thirteen thousand biographies. Other sections include a chronology of the motion picture, details of the financial structure of the industry, of distribution, exhibition and production organisations, a survey of the British and foreign film markets, a radio Who's Who, a complete list of all sound films made up to 1937, and details of the screen press and other organisations.

The special feature of the Almanac is its international character, and it probably provides the most comprehensive information on world film developments, film personnel and business structure, that is obtainable within one cover.

Here is five pounds, six ounces of useful facts for one pound. *The Motion Picture Almanac* is edited by Terry Ramsaye and published by Quigley Publications.

# PEOPLE WITH PURPOSES

## *NEWS NOTES*

Mr. James Arthur Rank, leader of the Religious Film Society, Mr. John Grierson of Film Centre, and Mr. Bruce Woolfe, are collaborating to make religious feature films for the church. First production is to be Tolstoi's *Where Love Is*.

The Cinema Christian Council is endeavouring to stimulate interest in the production and projection of religious films, and to encourage churches to regard films as a necessity. The Religious Film Society, working in close association with the Cinema Christian Council, has offered a large number of G.B. projectors to the churches on special terms, and is preparing a series of 26 religious film services—one being available each week for evangelistic work throughout the autumn and winter season. It is also establishing a depôt and studio at Ranger Road, Norwood, where an old cinema is being equipped for all branches of film production.

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For two and a half years Gaumont-British Instructional film units, headed by Mary Field, Paul Rotha, Donald Carter and Jack Holmes, have been filming in Scotland. Fifteen two-reel subjects have been made from 150,000 feet of film, and will shortly be released to schools, universities and the general public.

*Scottish Regional Geography*, which is the title of the series, will be followed by *West Indies*, now in the cutting room. The next survey will be of Yorkshire, and in due course G.B.I. hope to film the whole Empire.

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Mr. John G. Bridges, in charge of a party of the Overseas League who recently visited Scotland, is taking back to Canada several thousand feet of film depicting the scenic beauties of the country, with a view to inducing Canadians to come to Scotland for the Empire Exhibition at Glasgow next year. The films are to be screened in Montreal, Vancouver, Winnipeg and Toronto.

* * *

A series of reports made by educational inspectors in Scotland indicate that the main advance in the use of films in schools has been in the leading cities, but high hopes are held for a more extensive use in the future.

Branches of the Educational Film Association in Glasgow, Lanarkshire and Ayrshire have been enthusiastically supported, activities including instruction in the use of projectors, demonstrations of new films, and formation of study circles to criticise existing films and to discuss methods of presentation.

* * *

There is every likelihood that all schools in Perth will have a "film hour" included in their timetable. Efforts have also been made in other parts of Scotland to institute the practice, and in one place the local savings bank has given £1,500 towards defraying the cost of projectors.

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Rev. Merricks Arnott of Aberdeen has filmed children of the Church of Scotland in a parable play *A Pearl of Great Price*. The picture was shot in colour on the sands.

The question of the benefit obtained by mental defectives from films was recently discussed by the Kent Public Assistance Committee. It was pointed out that during the long winter evenings it was difficult to entertain the patients, and that the cinema was a great help towards recovery. Other members argued that when watching a film the patients' minds were carried into forgetfulness, when they should be brought to actuality.

A resolution was passed giving power to the Maidstone Guardians Committee to provide six cinema entertainments during the winter months.

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A cinema projector with deaf-aid headphones has been presented to the Margate Royal School for the deaf and dumb.

Future plans for improving the Swain Street Institution in Leicester include the installation of a cinema.

* * *

'Maryllia' cosmetics are showing colour films in their hairdressing and beauty salons. Clients receiving treatment will be able to see films showing correct make-up methods and the manufacture of cosmetics. Projectors and films will be lent to stockists and big London stores.

* * *

During the last few years there has been an increasing demand for lectures and film shows dealing with the social, æsthetic, and educational aspects of the Cinema. The need for co-ordinating and developing this important field has been recognised by Associated Realist Film Producers. This body, a non-profit-making group representative of documentary film makers, has set up a Lecture Committee which announces that a Panel of Lecturers has been formed, the names of which include: Edgar Anstey, Thomas Baird, Andrew Buchanan, Oliver Bell, Ritchie Calder, Alberto Cavalcanti, Elsie Cohen, Richard de Rochemont, Arthur Elton, William Farr, Russell Ferguson, John Grierson, Forsyth Hardy, Stanley Hawes, J. B. Holmes, Julian Huxley, Alfred Junge, F. C. Klingender, Stuart Legg, Marjorie Locket, Victor Peers, Paul Rotha, George H. Sewell, Alexander Shaw, Evelyn Spice, John Taylor, Basil Ward, Harry Watt, Norman Wilson, and Basil Wright.

In September the Committee will issue a syllabus of lectures and film shows available at suitable fees to societies, institutes, schools, and other bodies interested in the cinema. The subjects will cover every aspect of the theory and practice of the documentary, educational and fiction film. Application for this syllabus or for individual lectures should be made to the Secretary, A.R.F.P., 33 Soho Square, London, W.1.

# 'TO-DAY WE LIVE'

(*A Strand Film, produced by Paul Rotha, directed by R. I. Grierson and Ralph Bond*).

This film has something which the documentary directors have been accused—sometimes unjustifiably—of missing: the real human touch. It also has a sincerity that is all the more telling in that it is backed by extremely efficient technical work. Sponsored by the National Council of Social Service, its aim is to show how the work of the Council brings new life to a village, in the form of a community hall, and to a depressed area in Wales, in the form of a centre where men can meet and work on various crafts and improve their cultural knowledge. All the parts are taken by the actual inhabitants, and it says much for the production values that their acting knocks spots off a good many professionals one could mention.

But the real values of *To-day We Live* are twofold. Firstly, it presents English people, in their own surroundings and their own form of life, exactly as they are—one hesitates to add "with sympathy and understanding" for the sincerity of the film passes beyond that type of patronage. Secondly, it makes no bones about the facts, and presents the work of the N.C.S.S. as a palliative (and a very necessary one) rather than as a solution to a problem of the first magnitude. From the point of view of the sponsors themselves this adds immensely to the force of the message the film conveys.

In a film where every shot is full of the details of ordinary life it is difficult to pick out individual sequences, but there is one, showing the unemployed gathering coal from the slag heaps, with a high wind blowing men and dust across the frame, which is about as sensational a piece of shooting and cutting as has been seen for some time. It achieves at the same time an atmosphere of fierce despair which adds to the general emotional effect which signals the whole of this film as a really human document. And if any exhibitor thinks it's not "box-office," he's ten-to-one making a fairly big mistake.

C.M.

*People with Purposes*

## MAKING 'TO-DAY WE LIVE'

It was to the Rhondda Valley that our Unit travelled. The fame of the Rhondda miners is world-wide. They live in villages plunged deep in the valleys, brick and stone houses scattered with no thought of plan round the pits and slag heaps, a monumental indictment of the ruthlessness of early mining capitalism.

To-day most of them are without work. In 1920 49,000 were working; to-day less than 20,000. Pits everywhere are standing idle. The only contacts the miners have with coal are the slag heaps where sometimes they are permitted at ever present risk to life and limb, to scramble for enough to keep the fires burning in their homes.

**On the Slag Heaps.** **Strand Film**

Against this background we shot our sequences for *To-day We Live*, and no film unit could have had more willing co-operation and friendship. Our headquarters were at Pentre in the Big Rhondda, a mining village with most of its population out of work. We explained to them the film we wanted to make and once they understood that we were there for a serious purpose, we had no further difficulties.

Our script called for three chief characters—unemployed miners who with their colleagues were building an occupational centre with funds put up by the National Council of Social Services.

We picked our three men and for several evenings discussed the script in detail with them. Their advice and proposals were of the utmost value and in most cases their suggestions were incorporated in the script.

The result was that when shooting began our characters understood the script as well as we did ourselves, and this, combined with the traditional dramatic sense of the Welsh, made retakes—excepting only one or two especially difficult scenes—a rare occurrence.

Our locations were the streets of Pentre and Treorchy, the hut the men were building at the edge of a coal-dirtied river, and the slag heaps of Cymmer and Tylorstown.

We hope that we have succeeded in infusing into the film some of the warm human friendliness of the Rhondda men and women. We made many friends and came away hoping that one day we can go back to make another film that will afford perhaps greater opportunities for recording the lives of some of the grandest people in the world.

**RALPH BOND.**

# I SHOT IN PERSIA

## By John Taylor

IRAN is not an easy country to shoot in even at the best of times. It has a range of temperatures between 130 above and 40 below zero. In the south you might be wearing a snappy line in summer suiting. Two hundred miles north nothing short of a bear skin and a gill of rum will give you any comfort.

The railway construction road up to the plateau runs through fearsome ravines, on one side a wall of rock, on the other a straight drop into a large river four thousand feet below. As the car zig-zags along through a foot of snow the driver lights a cigarette with one hand, looks up, skids around a sharp corner and tells you casually that the only thing that was found of the bus and thirty people that went over here last week was the driver's hat. And so you plug on toward Teheran.

The temperature falls to thirty below, the radiator freezes up as the car runs. Ice forms on the inside of the windows and the driver chisels it off with a screwdriver as he drives. In the end he runs into a snow bank and spends an hour chipping the packed snow under the car with the screwdriver.

At the next town, when the snow has got to a depth of four feet, he buys a spade and some chains but he doesn't think they are really necessary. "What's four feet of snow or a skid and a four thousand foot drop? What the hell are these blasted photographers worrying about anyway?" The next fifteen miles takes three full days. The snow blows in drifts across the road, and then freezes. The driver goes on over the snow dunes until a dome top collapses and the car goes in up to the windows. The driver climbs out of his window, walks round and clears yours, hauls you out, and the digging starts again. On the third day you come to a town. The rooms open straight into the courtyard and before the evening meal you have an appetiser of gherkins and vodka. The dining-room is full of Italian, German and Swedish engineers, a wireless is going and over it comes "Mr. Baldwin went to Buckingham Palace this morning. The king . . ." and an Italian turns it over to a bellow of "Viva il Duce." You then with great relish tell the driver and the interpreter the dirt. What "Time" published a year ago and what they say of Baldwin and the Archbishop.

Next morning it looks rather dark and the water is frozen in the jug. When you open the door there is a solid wall of snow. The door is six feet high and you can't see any light. This is a bit of a shock but after a cigarette or two you go back to bed. Toward mid-day the voices get louder and a kindly soul puts his spade through the window. As the eight days go by the snow steps out of the room are getting very slippery and most of the engineers are sitting at separate tables.

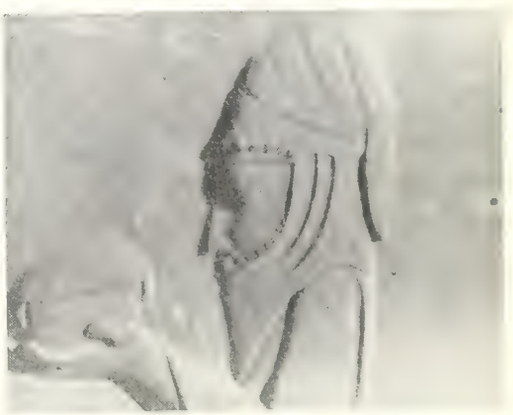
After Teheran we go south again into warmer parts. We want some stuff of Persepolis and we hear there is a camp of American archaeologists. We roll up after a three hundred mile drive thinking of the ice Americans usually have and how cool the beer will be. Knock politely at the door of a big fine house and ask for an archaeologist. The answer comes back he won't be long, he is having dinner. Ah, we think, just frying more chicken.

Three-quarters of an hour later a bearded man comes and resting one hand on the door and the other on the jamb asks what we want. We are making a film, and we want some shots of Persepolis, and does he know where we can stay for the night. Yes, there is an hotel down the road. We brighten and ask where. "Oh, just about seventy miles down on the right-hand side," and then a voice from inside the house "Haven't those people gone yet, Charles?" With sons of archaeologists, it is better to be a white slaver than to have anything to do with films, and if there are any rods left in Chicago he came from your town and you'll know him by a black goatee.

As we go from town to town the Iranians are nearly always decent, but the Europeans vary. In one town a well-fed Englishman shouts "If the unemployed knew what was good for them they'd pipe down a little. No one is starving until their belly blows out." His belly was blown out. In another the young missionaries brag stupidly and finally go to sleep drunkenly in their chairs.

Geologists and surveyors quietly tell stories of working in the heat and cold; of six-month trips into the mountains and how hard it is at first not having someone to talk to; after a few months not noticing it until you meet someone and even then not wanting to talk until it comes with a rush. The engineers talk of parts of the world and not of countries, they seem not to recognise boundaries. In one camp of fourteen there were two men who had worked in films.

It took twelve long hours mule ride to get to the camp and the first thing I saw in my tent was a copy of WORLD FILM NEWS, and if you think this is a lie you know what you can do.



# FILM GUIDE

## *Shorts*

**Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves** (Pupper in Gaspar-colour).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Slatinay and George Pal

| | |
|---|---|
| ACCRINGTON: Ritz | Sept. 23, 3 days |
| ALLOA: Central | Sept. 9, 3 days |
| CHELMSFORD: Pavilion | Sept. 13, 3 days |
| DARFIELD: Empire | Sept. 16, 3 days |
| EYEMOUTH: Picture House | Sept. 17, 2 days |
| GRIMSBY: Palace | Sept. 13, 6 days |
| HOLMEWOOD: Palace | Sept. 2, 3 days |
| HOLYHEAD: Hippodrome | Sept. 23, 3 days |
| KIRBY: Cinema | Sept. 13, 3 days |
| MEADOWFIELD: Kinema | Sept. 2, 3 days |
| SOUTHWELL: Ideal | Sept. 30, 3 days |
| TILLYCOULTRY: Cinema | Sept. 23, 3 days |
| WEST HARTLEPOOL: Gaiety | Sept. 6, 6 days |
| WIBSEY: Cosy | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| WOODHALL SPA: Kinema | Sept. 27, 3 days |

**Beside the Seaside** (Documentary of South Coast resorts).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson

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|---|---|
| STAFFORD: Picture House | Sept. 16, 3 days |

**Cable Ship** (The G.P.O. Cable Ships at work in the Channel).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
*DIRECTION:* Stuart Legg

| | |
|---|---|
| LIVERPOOL: Lytton Cinema | Sept. 11, 1 day |
| LONDON: Victoria, News Theatre | Sept. 23, 4 days |

**Cover to Cover** (Documentary of book production).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Alexander Shaw

| | |
|---|---|
| ACCRINGTON: Ritz | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| ASHBOURNE: Elite | Sept. 13, 3 days |
| BANTRY: Stella | Sept. 23, 3 days |
| BLACKPOOL: Waterloo | Sept. 26, 7 days |
| LANCHESTER: Empress | Sept. 10, 2 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Coliseum, Tranmere | Sept. 20, 3 days |
| LONDON: Monseigneur, Charing X | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| Monseigneur, Strand | Sept. 27, 3 days |
| Strand News, Strand | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| MEADOWFIELD: Kinema | Sept. 2, 3 days |
| NEATH: Gnoll | Sept. 20, 6 days |
| NEWPORT, I.O.W.: Odeon | Sept. 23, 3 days |
| NORTHAMPTON: Plaza | Sept. 27, 3 days |
| WEST HARTLEPOOL: Gaiety | Sept. 6, 6 days |
| WOODHALL SPA: Kinema | Sept. 16, 3 days |

**Enough to Eat?** (Investigation into mal-nutrition).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Gas, Light and Coke Co.
*DIRECTION:* Edgar Anstey

| | |
|---|---|
| GRANTHAM: Picture House | Sept. 30, 3 days |
| WEST KIRBY: Tudor | Sept. 2, 3 days |

**Firefighters** (Documentary of the London Fire Brigade).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Peter Colin

| | |
|---|---|
| ALTRINCHAM: Regal | Sept. 27, 6 days |
| COVENTRY: Gaumont Palace | Sept. 19, 1 day |
| LIVERPOOL: Smithdown Picture Playhouse | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| SOUTHWOLD: Cinema | Sept. 9, 3 days |

**Fishing on the Banks of Skye.**
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit

| | |
|---|---|
| BRISTOL: Olympia | Sept. 20, 3 days |
| Premier | Sept. 23, 3 days |
| LONDON: Victoria News Theatre | Sept. 27, 3 days |

**Forbidden Frontier** (Political situation between Poland and Lithuania).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* World Window Productions
*SUPERVISION:* Sir Philip Gibbs

| | |
|---|---|
| BIRKENHEAD: Super | Sept. 9, 3 days |
| BRAMHALL: Tudor | Sept. 23, 3 days |
| CIRENCESTER: Picture House | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| FARNHAM: Regal | Sept. 16, 3 days |
| GUERNSEY: Lyric | Sept. 2, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Casino | Sept. 2, 3 days |
| Empress | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| Gaumont Palace | Sept. 6, 6 days |
| Tatler | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| RUNCORN: Empress | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| SOUTHEND: Kursaal | Sept. 27, 3 days |
| WALLASEY: Trocadero | Sept. 13, 6 days |
| WANSTEAD: Kinema | Sept. 27, 3 days |

**Gentlemen in Top Hats and Gentlemen in Crowns** (Historical survey of European events for the past 40 years).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* A. B. Svensk Filmindustri
*ENGLISH VERSION:* Donald Taylor

| | |
|---|---|
| WANSTEAD: Kinema | Sept. 16, 3 days |

**Get Set** (Sports film—Polish).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Cinema Contact
*DIRECTION:* A. Ford

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Rd. | Sept. 6, 7 days |

**Heads and Tails** (Greyhound racing).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning

| | |
|---|---|
| ASHTON-UNDER-LYME: Empire | Sept. 20, 6 days |
| BRIGHOUSE: Ritz | Sept. 2, 3 days |
| CHATHAM: Picture House | Sept. 2, 3 days |
| ELTHAM: Palace | Sept. 6, 6 days |
| HIGHGATE: Electric Palace | Sept. 2, 3 days |
| NEWCASTLE: Olympia | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| WINDSOR: Empire | Sept. 26, 3 days |

**Hollywood To-day** (Behind the scenes in Film City).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Rupert Grayson

| | |
|---|---|
| BASINGSTOKE: Grand | Sept. 30, 3 days |
| CRAYFORD: Princess | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| GLASGOW: Broadway, Shettleston | Sept. 13, 6 days |
| Paragon, Gorbals | Sept. 16, 6 days |
| GRANTHAM: Empire | Sept. 27, 3 days |
| GUIDE BRIDGE, Lancs.: Odeon | Sept. 27, 6 days |
| PETERSFIELD: Savoy | Sept. 9, 3 days |
| SHEFFIELD: Don | Sept. 16, 3 days |
| SOUTHALL: Palace | Sept. 6, 6 days |
| WINDSOR: Regal | Sept. 9, 3 days |

**How to be a Detective** (In the Benchley manner).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION and DIRECTION:* Robert Benchley

| | |
|---|---|
| MANCHESTER: Tatler | Sept. 1, 4 days |

**Islands of the Bounty** (Islands associated with the famous mutiny).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.

| | |
|---|---|
| ACCRINGTON: Ritz | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| ARKLOW: Gaiety | Sept. 3, 2 days |
| BACUP: Empire | Sept. 29, 4 days |
| BUXTON: Opera House | Sept. 20, 6 days |
| GILESGATE: Crescent | Sept. 10, 2 days |
| HOLYHEAD: Kings | Sept. 23, 3 days |
| MANCHESTER: Riviera, Cheetham | Sept. 27, 6 days |
| MELBOURNE: Empire | Sept. 30, 3 days |
| NANTWICH: Ye Olde Wyche | Sept. 16, 3 days |
| SCARBOROUGH: Odeon | Sept. 26, 4 days |
| SCUNTHORPE: Royal | Sept. 16, 3 days |
| SUNDERLAND: Millfield | Sept. 2, 3 days |
| TRIMDON: Imperial | Sept. 2, 3 days |
| WASHINGTON: Queens | Sept. 23, 3 days |
| WEXFORD: Cinema Palace | Sept. 20, 3 days |
| WHITBY: Waterloo | Sept. 20, 3 days |
| WOODHALL SPA: Kinema | Sept. 16, 3 days |

**Joie de Vivre** (Cartoon).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*PRODUCTION:* Gross and Hoppin

| | |
|---|---|
| CHELMSFORD: Ritz | Sept. 2, 3 days |
| GUILDFORD: Plaza | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| ILKLEY: New | Sept. 23, 3 days |
| SUTTON-ON-SEA: Savoy | Sept. 20, 6 days |
| WIMBLEDON: Regal | Sept. 2, 3 days |

**Key to Scotland** (Documentary of Edinburgh).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson

| | |
|---|---|
| AIRDRIE: Pavilion | Sept. 23, 3 days |
| LONDON: Monseigneur, Piccadilly | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| NOTTINGHAM: News House | Sept. 6, 3 days |

**London after Midnight** (Documentary).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Paul Rotha for Strand Films

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|---|---|
| MANCHESTER: Tatler | Sept. 27, 6 days |

**Men Against the Sea** (Documentary of North Sea trawling).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Vernon Sewell

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Regal, Golders Green | Sept. 20, 6 days |

**Night Mail** (Documentary of the northward trip of the postal special).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Basil Wright, Harry Watt

| | |
|---|---|
| ACCRINGTON: Ritz | Sept. 23, 3 days |
| ASTLEY: Kinema | Sept. 16, 3 days |
| BIGGAR: Cinema | Sept. 20, 1 day |
| BLACKBURN: Roxy | Sept. 22, 4 days |
| CHEADLE HULME: Elysian | Sept. 13, 3 days |
| MELBOURNE: Empire | Sept. 30, 3 days |
| NANTWICH: Ye Olde Wyche | Sept. 16, 3 days |
| NEWPORT, I.O.W.: Odeon | Sept. 20, 3 days |
| STOCKPORT: Cinema, Poynton | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| WREXHAM: Odeon | Sept. 6, 3 days |

**Nomad in the North** (Scenic film of Norway).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION* and *DIRECTION:* C. E. Hodges

| | |
|---|---|
| ALLOA: La Scala | Sept. 13, 6 days |
| BRAMHALL: Tudor | Sept. 27, 3 days |
| BRIDGWATER: Palace | Sept. 30, 3 days |
| CHATHAM: Electric | Sept. 5, 7 days |
| CHESTER: Music Hall | Sept. 20, 3 days |
| CIRENCESTER: Picture House | Sept. 27, 3 days |
| FARNHAM: Regal | Sept. 16, 3 days |
| GAINSBOROUGH: Grand | Sept. 23, 3 days |
| HARBOURNE: Picture House | Sept. 30, 3 days |
| ILFRACOMBE: Scala | Sept. 20, 6 days |
| IPSWICH: Picture House | Sept. 6, 6 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Bedford | Sept. 23, 3 days |
| Gaumont, Princes Park | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| LONDON: Broadway Palladium, Ealing | Sept. 6, 7 days |
| Gaumont Palace, Chelsea | Sept. 6, 7 days |
| MONMOUTH: Picture House | Sept. 30, 3 days |
| MORECAMBE: Tower | Sept. 5, 1 day |
| PALMERS GREEN: Palladium• | Sept. 6, 7 days |
| WEST KIRBY: Tudor | Sept. 13, 3 days |
| WEYMOUTH: Regent | Sept. 20, 6 days |

**Out to Play** (London's children in street and park).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* Harold Lowenstein

| | |
|---|---|
| BASINGSTOKE: Plaza | Sept. 12, 4 days |
| GRAVESEND: Majestic | Sept. 5, 7 days |
| LEYTON: Plaza | Sept. 20, 6 days |
| LONDON: Cameo, Victoria | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| Centre, Windmill Street | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| News Theatre, Waterloo | Sept. 27, 3 days |

**Overland Express** (German travelogue).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* C. E. Hodges Productions

| | |
|---|---|
| BRAMHALL: Tudor | Sept. 9, 3 days |
| BRIDGWATER: Palace | Sept. 20, 3 days |
| CINDERFORD: Palace | Sept. 9, 3 days |
| FARNHAM: Regal | Sept. 2, 3 days |
| GUERNSEY: Lyric | Sept. 23, 3 days |
| LYDNEY: Picture House | Sept. 16, 3 days |
| WEST KIRBY: Tudor | Sept. 2, 3 days |

**Plane Sailing** (The ins and outs of gliding).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Bosworth Goldman

| | |
|---|---|
| BARNSLEY: Princess | Sept. 2, 3 days |
| BIRMINGHAM: Gaumont Palace | Sept. 5, 7 days |
| Odeon, Warley | Sept. 13, 6 days |
| BRIDGWATER: Palace | Sept. 6, 3 days |
| BUXTON: Spa | Sept. 2, 3 days |
| CHEPSTOW: Palace | Sept. 9, 3 days |

# Shorts (contd.)

**Plane Sailing—continued**

CINDERFORD: Palace Sept. 23, 3 days
CIRENCESTER: Picture House Sept. 13, 3 days
GLASGOW: Vogue, Rutherglen Sept. 27, 3 days
GOOLE: Tower Sept. 9, 3 days
HULL: Langham Sept. 9, 3 days
ILFRACOMBE: Scala Sept. 27, 3 days
LEEK: Grand Sept. 6, 7 days
LONDON: Rivoli, Whitechapel Sept. 6, 7 days
LYDNEY: Picture House Sept. 20, 3 days
MANCHESTER: Tatler Sept. 1, 4 days
MONMOUTH: Picture House Sept. 6, 3 days
MOTHERWELL: La Scala Sept. 2, 3 days
ROYAL: Cinema Royal Sept. 27, 3 days
SALISBURY: Picture House Sept. 9, 3 days
STOKE-ON-TRENT: Hippodrome Sept. 23, 3 days
TUNBRIDGE WELLS: Kosmos Sept. 16, 3 days
WARRINGTON: Odeon Sept. 13, 6 days
WEST KIRBY: Tudor Sept. 30, 3 days
WILMSLOW: Rex Sept. 2, 3 days
WISHAW: Cinema Sept. 2, 3 days

**Secret Hiding Places** (Priest holes to be found in English country houses).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Granville Squiers
BIRMINGHAM: Grand, Alum Rock Sept. 27, 6 days
GRANTHAM: Picture House Sept. 13, 3 days
HIGHGATE: Empire Sept. 12, 4 days
NEWTOWN: Regent Sept. 23, 3 days
NOTTINGHAM: News House Sept. 13, 3 days
STOCKPORT: Cinema, Poynton Sept. 23, 3 days
WELSHPOOL: Clive Sept. 27, 3 days

**Six Thirty Collection** (Documentary of the West End sorting office).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
*DIRECTION:* Edgar Anstey, Harry Watt
BIGGAR: Cinema Sept. 23, 1 day
BRADFORD: Grange Sept. 6, 3 days

**Snow Water** (Water power in the Swiss mountains).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* H. Dreyer
BIRKENHEAD: Plaza Sept. 13, 6 days
BRAMHALL: Tudor Sept. 20, 3 days
BURY: Odeon Sept. 20, 6 days
CHESTERFIELD: Picture House Sept. 13, 6 days
FINSBURY PARK: Rink Sept. 6, 6 days
GRANTHAM: Picture House Sept. 23, 3 days
HALIFAX: Picture House Sept. 20, 6 days
HARBORNE: Picture House Sept. 16, 3 days
HULL: Criterion Sept. 13, 6 days
LONDON: Eros, Piccadilly Sept. 16, 3 days
MONMOUTH: Picture House Sept. 13, 3 days
PETERBOROUGH: Broadway Sept. 6, 6 days
REDDITCH: Gaumont Palace Sept. 13, 3 days
RHYL: Plaza Sept. 23, 3 days
SALTAIRE: Picture House Sept. 9, 3 days
WEST KIRBY: Tudor Sept. 27, 3 days
WOOD GREEN: Gaumont Palace Sept. 6, 6 days
YORK: Odeon Sept. 20, 6 days

**Spring Comes to Town** (About Hyde Park).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION and PHOTOGRAPHY:* M. L. Nathan
LONDON: Cameo, Charing Cross Rd. Sept. 2, 4 days
Cameo, Victoria Sept. 9, 4 days
Centre, Windmill Street Sept. 9, 4 days
WINDSOR: Playhouse Sept. 26, 5 days

**Strange Adventures** (About Africa).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
ALDERSHOT: Alexandra Sept. 27, 3 days
ANDOVER: Odeon Sept. 23, 3 days
BARNSLEY: Empire Sept. 6, 6 days
BARROW: Coliseum Sept. 20, 3 days
BIRKENHEAD: Super Sept. 23, 3 days
CHORLEY: Theatre Royal Sept. 16, 3 days
DORCHESTER: Palace Sept. 23, 3 days
FARNBOROUGH: Scala Sept. 20, 3 days
FARNHAM: Regal Sept. 27, 3 days
FLEET: County Sept. 20, 3 days
GLASGOW: Kings Sept. 27, 3 days
HARROW: Odeon Sept. 2, 3 days
HULL: Regis Sept. 27, 3 days
Royalty Sept. 2, 3 days
ILKLEY: New Sept. 20, 3 days

**Strange Adventures—continued**

KILMARNOCK: Regal Sept. 6, 3 days
LEYTON: Kings Sept. 2, 3 days
Plaza Sept. 13, 6 days
LICHFIELD: Regal Sept. 16, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Empress Sept. 9, 3 days
Magnet Sept. 23, 3 days
LONDON: News Theatre, Victoria Sept. 6, 3 days
Walpole, Ealing Sept. 2, 3 days
LYDNEY: Picture House Sept. 27, 3 days
MONMOUTH: Picture House Sept. 23, 3 days
NEWPORT, I.O.W.: Odeon Sept. 9, 3 days
NORWICH: Carlton Sept. 2, 3 days
SOUTHPORT: Palladium Sept. 12, 1 day
STAINES: Majestic Sept. 2, 3 days

**The Way to the Sea** (The roads and railways from London to the coast).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* J. B. Holmes
MANCHESTER: Tatler Sept. 13, 6 days

**Weather Forecast** (How information is gathered for official forecasts).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
*DIRECTION:* Evelyn Spice
SOUTHPORT: Queens Sept. 13, 2 days
EASINGWOLD: Cinema Sept. 23, 3 days

# Foreign Films

**A Castle in Flanders** (German)
*DISTRIBUTION:* Tobis
*DIRECTION:* Geza de Bolvary
*STARRING:* Marta Eggerth
Paul Hartmann
LONDON: Berkeley Sept. 1, indefinitely

**The Crime of Monsieur Lange** (French)
*DIRECTION:* Jean Renoir
*STARRING:* Jules Berry
René Lefèvre
Slorelle
LONDON: Curzon Following *Stradivarius*

**L'Equipage** (French)
*PRODUCTION:* Pathé
*DIRECTION:* Anatole Litvak
*STARRING:* Jean Murat
Annabella
LONDON: Studio One Sept. 11, indefinitely

**Liebesmelodie** (German)
*DISTRIBUTION:* Independent
*DIRECTION:* Tourjanski
*STARRING:* Marta Eggerth
LONDON: Forum Sept. 5, 7 days

**The New Gulliver** (Russian puppet film)
*DISTRIBUTION:* Soyukino
*DIRECTION:* A. Ptushko
LONDON: Forum Sept. 12, 7 days

**Remous** (French)
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* Edmond Greville
*STARRING:* Jean Galland
Jeanne Boitel
LONDON: Studio One Sept. 1, 4 days

**Stradivarius** (German)
*DISTRIBUTION:* Tobis
*DIRECTION:* Geza de Bolvary
*STARRING:* Edwige Feuillère
Pierre Richard Willm
LONDON: Curzon Sept. 1, indefinitely

**The Student of Prague** (Austrian)
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* Arthur Robison
*STARRING:* Anton Walbrook
Dorothea Wieck
LONDON: Studio One Sept. 5, 7 days

## *Feature Films for September Release*

This is not a complete list of current releases, but a *W.F.N.* selection. While all poor and mediocre films are omitted from the list, inclusion does not necessarily infer outstanding merit. For the guidance of our readers, films starred in *Review of Reviews* are again starred.

**A Day at the Races** (M.G.M.) * * *
*DIRECTOR:* Sam Wood
*STARRING:* Marx Brothers

**Born to Dance** (M.G.M.) **
*DIRECTOR:* Roy del Ruth
*STARRING:* Eleanor Powell
James Stewart
Una Merkel
Virginia Bruce

**Camille** (M.G.M.) **
*DIRECTOR:* George Cukor
*STARRING:* Greta Garbo
Robert Taylor
Jessie Ralph
Lionel Barrymore

**Elephant Boy** (United Artists—London Films) **
*DIRECTOR:* Robert Flaherty
Zoltan Korda
*STARRING:* Sabu
Walter Hudd

**After the Thin Man** (M.G.M.) *
*DIRECTOR:* W. S. Van Dyke
*STARRING:* William Powell
Myrna Loy
James Stewart
Elissa Landi

**Fire Over England** (United Artists—London Films) *
*DIRECTOR:* William K. Howard
*STARRING:* Flora Robson
Laurence Olivier
Vivien Leigh
Leslie Banks
Raymond Massey

**Shall We Dance?** (Radio) *
*DIRECTOR:* Mark Sandrich
*STARRING:* Fred Astaire
Ginger Rogers

**Charge of the Light Brigade** (First National)
*DIRECTOR:* Michael Curtiz
*STARRING:* Errol Flynn
Olivia de Haviland

**Lloyd's of London** (20th Century-Fox)
*DIRECTOR:* Henry King
*STARRING:* Madeleine Carroll
Tyrone Power
Freddie Bartholomew
Sir Guy Standing

**On the Avenue** (20th Century-Fox)
*DIRECTOR:* Roy del Ruth
*STARRING:* Dick Powell
Madeleine Carroll
Alice Faye
Ritz Brothers

**Prince and the Pauper** (Warner Bros.)
*DIRECTOR:* William Keighley
*STARRING:* Errol Flynn
Claude Rains
Billy and Bobbie Mauch

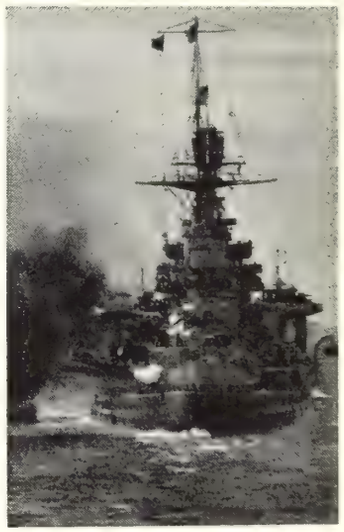
# For the first time the REAL work of the fleet in "OUR ISLAND NATION"

For the first time the real work of the Fleet at Sea can be shown to the public in dramatic form.

Thanks to the close and continuous co-operation of the Admiralty, "Our Island Nation" gives the point of view of the Naval Rating, as well as that of the Officer. It is a " close-up " of conditions as they actually occur every day.

The original story was written by two retired Naval Officers—Commander Hunt and Commander Brinton. They and the unit of camera men experienced terrific gale conditions. They worked in ships, aircraft and aircraft carriers of the Home and Mediterranean Fleets during the combined manoeuvres in the Atlantic last March, and at Gibraltar, Malta and in the Mediterranean during January, February and March.

With STANLEY HOLLOWAY as Chief Yeoman of Signals. *Running time* 60 *minutes.*



## PRESS REPORTS:

"*Magnificent photography of the services that the Royal Navy renders to the Nation.*"
"*The Times,*" *July* 31, 1937

"*An impression much happier than the usual official record . . . Jack Tar emerges as a human being and not a movie puppet.*"
" *Glasgow Herald,*" *July* 31, 1937

"*May justly be termed the best film of the work of the British Navy yet produced . . . Battleships are seen in a terrific gale and these shots alone give the film an outstanding value . . . but even better follows. . . .* "
" *Scotsman,*" *July* 31, 1937

"*The Navy has done it at last . . . Camera work is truly magnificent . . . 'shots' which must be unique.*"
"*Morning Post,*" *July* 31, 1937
and numerous others.

*Other films by E.G.S. include* "Edinburgh Zoo," " *charming studies,*" " *especially delightful*" (" *Cinema*"); " West Wind," " *many thrills,*" " *fine photography,*" " *unusual*" (" *Cinema*"); " Poland " "*informative,*" "*thoughtful description*" (" *Cinema*")
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# "FILMS *that* TELL"

# WORLD FILM NEWS

## AMATEUR AND TECHNICAL SECTION

# If I were Entering the A.S.C. Contest

*by*

**Andrew Buchanan**

I SHOULD select the British Countryside for three reasons. Firstly, because it is so accessible, secondly, in view of the fact that it is grossly overdone, and thirdly because, being so overdone, it would force me to seek an original line of approach. It is a strange fact that subjects which are rarely handled by producers invariably assume an air of originality merely because they have not been seen before, whereas, in many instances, they are most uninspired. Consequently, I would prefer to approach a well-worn type of subject, and endeavour to give it a new complexion.

It will be noted that Shell-Mex offer prizes for films of the British Countryside, and so I should seek to portray the right place for the motor car in the country, which is not quite the same thing as regarding it as the be all and end all of a motoring holiday.

*I should build the picture around the theme that a car is a means to an end by performing the magical feat of bringing distant country places nearer—of placing inaccessible spots within easy reach of the ordinary family.* This vital fact is rather taken for granted to-day, and when one encounters a hidden village or an isolated farmhouse, one rarely pauses to realise that, less than a quarter of a century ago, such places were in another world beyond our reach, and never gazed upon by people who, but a few hours previously, were probably lunching in London. Therefore, I should commence with this point in mind, and I should develop the theme by revealing the fact that a car, correctly utilised, carries people to lovely places.

The introduction should embody an impression of the mentality of the insane motorist who never leaves his vehicle, never stops, and who spends his entire holiday rushing up and down the country, seeing nothing save the rear of the car ahead, which he must either pass or die in the attempt. The charming and interesting spots he *passes* are too numerous to mention. Each delightful village is but another milestone conquered on the way to his final destination, if he has one.

The contrast would be afforded by the leisurely, though far from sluggish motorist who regards his car as a means to reach distant places *and then begin* his holiday, embarking on a voyage of discovery, on foot. There is such a great difference between the two methods of approaching a motoring holiday that I really do feel an excellent and original film can be created out of the theme, which offers a good foundation upon which to construct the basic subject—the British Countryside.

I should, therefore, begin by creating an impression of this Motor Age by introducing *contrasting* shots of giant motor roads, along which endless streams of cars are tearing—escaping into the country, but, ironically enough, missing its beauties, in many instances.

Follow the introductory shots of broad white roads with an amusing sequence revealing how the countryside appears to the insane motorist. Select several attractive spots and shoot them whilst swinging the camera rapidly and jerkily from one side to another. Secondly, take a number of close shots of car wheels flying past the camera, and others of vehicles racing along. The latter to be taken by the camera very near the roadside, facing the traffic so that the results shall be blurred. Intercut the swinging shots of country scenes, which should appear distorted—a mass of streaks—with the wheels and cars, and strengthen the sequence with close-ups of speedometers registering high speeds, and other shots taken from a fast-moving car, the camera concentrating upon the receding road at the back, and then the aspect from near the front wings.

Intelligently assembled, all those scenes can create an astonishingly fast prologue to the major film, and the blurred jumpy shots will convey the countryside as seen by the speeding driver. Now for the other side of the picture—featuring, of course, the Director himself, who is all that a sane, sensible motorist should be! His holiday follows the mad prologue, and commences with a large scale map. A finger points to a particular centre, and then traces all the interesting little places within walking distance. That dissolves into an impression of starting off—luggage being strapped on—engine throbbing—brake released—exhaust puffing—wheels moving away. Then several shots of the car en route, travelling normally, that is, at a good average speed to avoid creating a ridiculous comparison with the other speeding cars. The journey can be punctuated by various road signs which show the increasing mileage, the final one to merge into the car slowing down and stopping. Engine switched off, brake engaged, luggage unstrapped, and people leaving the vehicle.

Thereafter, the film establishes the model motorists as people who actually possess legs. Indeed, this is so remarkable that several lengthy close-ups are advisable, which concentrate upon the feet and limbs of the wise walkers. The balance of the film can then be devoted to a leisurely survey of well chosen villages, architecture, harvesting, rural industries, or whatever truly symbolises the British Countryside from the Director's point of view. Nearby locations of real interest which are beyond walking distance, can be introduced smoothly by using the car wheels as links, and would help to keep alive the theme of the production—the place of the car in the countryside.

I should be inclined to terminate the film with an epilogue revealing the two distinct types of motorists under discussion, both having returned from their holidays. The first is the insane gentleman, wearing huge goggles and a wide smile. He holds a map in his trembling hand, and his finger traces, at lightning speed, the enormous journey he has done—from Lands End to John O' Groats, *via* Wales, Brighton, three hospitals and Blackpool. He went everywhere and saw nothing. The second is seen studying a tiny area in which he stayed and, incidentally, captured on the screen for our enjoyment.

That is but one idea for approaching the British Countryside somewhat differently. Rural places do not change, but the very fact that they have become accessible through the car should lead the Director to do equal justice to both the vehicle which brings them near, and the beauties of the spots themselves. I suggest the above outline is preferable to the somewhat boring car film, which features very large families at very large picnics, each scene of which is usually shot to include the bonnet of the car which brought them, sticking out forbiddingly in the foreground. The British Countryside is a gift from God; and the motor car will take you to the farthest corners of the nation, though it can never reveal the inner charms of Nature.

# FILM SOCIETIES AND AMATEUR CLUBS

**AYR FILM UNIT:** Hon. Secretary, A. Cunningham, Esq., 8 Alexandra Avenue, Prestwick, Ayrshire.

Since the last report, members of the Unit have been engaged on the production of an advertising film of Ayr, being made for Ayr Attractions Committee. This film, which was commenced in the last week of June, is now almost complete—over seventy of its hundred odd scenes having been shot. The remaining ones are mainly routine, continuity scenes, titles, etc.

A large number of copies will be made for the Attractions Committee, who have made arrangements to have them circulated both in this country and abroad.

Apart from the making of this film, which has occupied a large number of members, there has been little Club activity. The Committee is now considering the winter programme, and the Scenario section is hunting for a suitable story for the next production. They hope to have this ready to put before the Annual General Meeting this month.

**BLACKHEATH FILM CLUB:** Hon. Secretary, John Gibson, 6 St. German's Place, London, S.E.3.

Announces a Gala Week to be held in the Studio, 2 Banchory Road, Blackheath, at 8.30 p.m. each evening from October 11th to 16th. The programme will include the Club's latest film (a comedy of the Naughty Nineties) supported by a newsreel and films by members. Hopes that solo workers and Clubs who can pay a visit during that week will do so; Blackheath amateurs will be glad to see them. Admission by ticket, obtainable from the Hon. Secretary, or from any member. Apply early—120 a night is the limit.

Members, in addition to the Gala Week preparations, are busy overhauling the Club's lighting outfit, and planning for the next film to be started in November.

**BOGNOR REGIS FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Miss L. Cornish, "Southernhay," New Barn Lane, Felpham, Sussex.

Production No. 7 (at the moment untitled) is nearing completion. The story has filmed very successfully, and should be one of the best comedies the Society has produced.

The air chase sequence, taken at the Ford Aero Club, made a fine climax to the film. No. 1 cameraman Mr. Barry Hart filmed from the air, and No. 2, Mr. Brooker, had the ground camera. Both shots matched well.

The Film Editor estimates that the picture can be cut down to 800 ft. as originally planned.

Members recently had the pleasure of a visit from Dr. Barker of the Palmers Green Society, who explained the new continuous printer which they had made. He also showed one or two of their films, of a very high standard, and taken on Neg. Pos. stock. As the Bognor Regis Society works on Rev. stock, a very interesting discussion took place.

Miss Patricia Hutchins also visited the Society, and members spent an interesting evening delving into film topics.

**THE DON BOSCO GUILD FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Terence Grant, B.Sc., Catholic Institute, Newton Place, Charing Cross, Glasgow.

The Society, headed by the Guild of Catholic Teachers, was formed in October of last year. Since its inception fortnightly meetings have been held and many activities successfully carried out. The following lectures have been given: "The Film in Education," by Mr. J. P. Kennedy, M.A.; "Teaching Technique and the Film," by Mr. William Bailey, M.A., Ed.B.; "The British Film Institute," by Miss E. Duff, M.A.; and "The Secrets of Nature Films," by Mr. T. Grant, B.Sc.

Numerous educational and religious films have been viewed by members, and their value for school use noted. The Group is primarily concerned with films suitable for religious instruction in schools, and is seeking information in this respect both at home and abroad.

Last year a repertory show was given in the Catholic Institute for Catholic teachers, the programme including the Mill Hill missionary film of Uganda. It is intended to give several of these shows next winter.

This year the Society has produced a colour film of the "Corpus Christi" procession at Carfin Grotto (450 ft.), and is now preparing to film the "Madonna Procession" on the feast of the Assumption.

**MANCHESTER AND SALFORD FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, R. Cordwell, Esq., 13 Milwain Drive, Heaton Chapel, Stockport.

The following arrangements have been made:

*Film Selection Committee:*

Chairman (Mr. T. Cavanagh), Mr. Cyril Ray (Manager, Tatler Cinema) and the Hon. Secretary.

*Subscription:*

10*s*. per annum, which may be paid if desired in not more than five consecutive monthly instalments.

*Films Booked* (awaiting confirmation):

September 26th: *Madrid To-day*, *We Live in Two Worlds*, *Opta Empfangt*, *La Journée d'André*, and *Fredlös*.

October 24th: *The World To-day*, *Heute Grosse Dampferfahrt*, *Stoff Marchen*, *Development of the Franchise* and *The Robber Symphony* (alternatively, original version of *The Unfinished Symphony*).

November 21st: *Millions of Us*, *To-day We Live*, *The Hunt*, and *Merlusse*.

Further shows will be arranged monthly from December to April. Applications for membership welcomed.

**WEST ESSEX FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, F. J. Philpott, Esq., 7 Wellington Road, East Ham. E.6.

Further progress has been made in the shooting of *Hiking*, of which most of the outdoor shots have now been taken. Shooting is proceeding apace in connection with *Pot of Basil*, under Mr. S. Reed's direction. Mr. Reed is also responsible for the scenario, based on Keat's story "Boccaccio."

**WEST MIDDLESEX AMATEUR CINE CLUB:** E. H. Whittleton, Esq., 39 Derwentwater Road, Acton, W.3.

Shooting on *It Can't Happen Here* has now been completed, and the film is in the cutting room. A new production is planned for September, and several stories are in the hands of the selection committee.

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the Club Studios, 43 Bond Street, Ealing, W.5, on Tuesday, September 14th, at 8.30 p.m. Activities during the past year will be surveyed, and the programme for 1937–38 placed before members. Members of other Clubs are welcome to this and other meetings of the West Middlesex A.C.C.

## *FILM SOCIETIES IN CANADA*

### *by Margaret J. Miller*

Canada's nine film societies, strung out at intervals across a wide continent, have had peculiar problems to deal with. Their remoteness from Europe, their dependence on the United States for many of their films, the question of co-operation where distances are so great, have all contributed in making it difficult to obtain good and promptly delivered programmes.

In the Montreal Film Society we became well accustomed, during our first season of 1935–36, to being suddenly disappointed of films which we had hoped and expected to see. We also had to put up with a good deal of inferior material. Other Canadian film societies had the same experiences, and for the same reasons.

It was discovered, for one thing, that the American distributors who sent us our films from New York knew very little about the programmes they were providing. A film recommended as "a good Russian short" turned out to be four reels of tedious and repetitive semi-medical material which pleased no one in the audience. Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, advertised as a silent film and ordered as such, was sent along with an excruciatingly sentimental Hollywood commentary added to it.

So undependable was the taste of the suppliers that the Montreal society made a practice of ordering several shorts, previewing them in the theatre of a Montreal film producing organisation, and showing the better films, or the less bad, from the selection provided.

Unexpected difficulties with the customs cropped up now and then. On the day on which the Swedish film *En Natt* was to be shown a telegram was received from the American customs officials saying that since the print was a Swedish one with no American manufacture in it, full duty—amounting to some

*(Film Societies in Canada—contd.)*

£160—would have to be paid when it was sent back to the States. Needless to say, the order for *En Natt* was cancelled.

The French film question is still a troublesome one. Canada, with a large percentage of French-Canadians in her population, uses many French films, and an organisation called France Films has the distributing rights for these. Because of this, no American distributor will ship a French film to a Canadian film society even though it is unobtainable through France Films. There may be plenty of prints of René Clair films in New York, but unless the Canadian distributors can supply one, it is practically impossible to get a Clair film for film society showing.

*La Kermesse Héroïque* came out to Canada some time ago, was seen and banned by the censor while still in bond, and went straight back to France again. Here again there were prints in New York, and no chance of getting one.

But although certain annoyances persisted, the season of 1936–37 saw many improvements. In September 1936 a film booking office was formed at the headquarters of the National Film Society in Ottawa, and societies all over Canada were encouraged to get their films through its agency. In this way films could be booked for a number of showings instead of for one only, and Canada received more consideration and a cheaper rate from American distributors.

The standard of shorts available to societies went up considerably when, through the negotiations of John Grierson, British documentaries were sent from England to the Dominion Film Bureau at Ottawa.

Gradually, too, societies were collecting more information about films in which they might be interested. At the beginning of things, the ordering of a film was often a shot in the dark, since films had to be chosen from lists of names without information as to director, cast, or date of production. For this reason the Montreal society started to build up a catalogue of cuttings from film reviews and from the programmes of film societies all over the world, which may now be referred to in deciding which films are the most desirable.

The material obtainable, however, is still somewhat limited. It is not a case of saying "We want this film" and promptly getting it, but of choosing the best of what can be got.

In the matter of educational films Canada is better off. The film society movement has in many provinces taken an educational turn, and several universities have installed film equipment. The University of Alberta has laid in a huge library of 16 mm. films of educational value, and the Vancouver branch of the National Film Society is trying to encourage the establishment of a library of educational films for British Columbia schools.

Lately all societies have been helping to make a Catalogue of Film Sources in Canada, so that any educational body in need of a film can apply to the nearest film society and be told what is available. While Canada's film societies are apt to be disappointed of the programmes they wish to see, her schools and universities can be well served.

# FILMING BRITAIN—Article No. 5

## Summing up the opportunities for Amateurs entering the A.S.C. Contest

### by Evelyn Spice

It is five months since the Amateur Services Club was organised to give help and encouragement to amateurs to film the life of Britain.

Much correspondence and talk has resulted, and out of it all has come some constructive criticism which leads me to make some suggestions to members.

To the front, in word from the clubs, came the problem of how—if the club went over to documentary films—all the members could be put to work on the film. However much I have talked about using the members as natural "actors" in a documentary, I have failed to put the point across. So letting that pass, we finally hit upon the idea of a documentary group within the club. In two cases—Ace Movies and the Blackheath Film Club—this arrangement is already in operation, and both groups are busy on films. The documentary group has the club's equipment behind them and can use the studio lamps and the studio itself for their close-ups and stage shots or sequences. For shooting on actual location quite often proves totally impracticable. To have the use of a studio to re-stage the scene is invaluable.

There have been a good few letters which show that some amateurs do not quite realise the scope of the documentary, and are inclined to look upon it as pure scenic stuff, or a glorified newsreel. While, in reality, the documentary people always urge the need for more human stuff in the films—and point to Flaherty as an example. The good documentary, they urge, should be dramatic and should present people as human beings, not parts of machines, or robots. Flaherty dramatised his Eskimo family without resorting to cheap plot. He might have had a strong plot so long as he did not sacrifice his Eskimo people to it.

In *Elephant Boy* the plot was a cheap affair, but it could not kill the character of the small Indian boy. He and his elephant were the film and strongly dramatic enough to have dispensed completely with the accepted idea of a plot.

The plain fact of it is, that two reels will not carry a strong plot. But they will carry, and must have, a theme. (And I keep wondering if the short story—well handled and specially written—could not be well handled in two reels.)

I must get on to my second point, about filming one's own district.

For years back, teachers and all users of educational and documentary films, have been wanting interesting accounts, on film, of sections of Britain. Towns, industries, architecture, etc.

So great has been the need for them that many teachers have started making their own films of their locality, to use in their classrooms. W. H. George, an early experimenter in educational pictures in the classroom, has made several films in his holiday time because he could find none to fit in with his curriculum.

Non-theatrical audiences throughout the country number many thousands and there is a great need for suitable films.

Who is more capable, then, of filming their own locality than the amateurs who live there, know the people, what they do, how they live? There is a local pride in the town or village or community that the stranger misses, probably, and so much local detail that the film-maker from outside might need months to do a good job of scripting. And there it lies, for the amateur to capture on film. He has the opportunity at hand to reveal (to audiences much larger than he quite realises) the true life of his community, as he would like it presented.

The *Glasgow Bulletin*, commenting on the fact that a competition was open for films about Youth Hostels, puts it in a nutshell.

> "The offer opens up a hitherto neglected field for hostel propaganda, and the cine-camera might be called to the aid of the S.Y.H.A. Films could be shot by the Association for use in the winter lectures given to the various organisations, and would give the outsider a vivid impression of hostel life.
>
> "Perhaps it might take a Grierson or a Korda to do justice to the infinite variety of the movement, but from the wealth of material, even amateurs can prepare a scenario that will make a colourful film.
>
> "Most of the hostels are set against beautiful country and a film of a tour in the Borders or by way of the North-West chain would have no dearth of scenic material. The quick growth of the movement lends itself to a pictorial record of such early hostels as Inverbeg compared with the palatial castles of Dalquharrah and Hoddom."

The amateur has the opportunity. He knows his locality. He may, in spite of that, find himself at a loss to see anything to film. So close is he to his subject that he cannot get back from it and view it impersonally enough to get a script idea or theme.

The Amateur Services Club, looking in from the outside, offers to help him find a theme, to point out the things that might be overlooked by one who knows them very well.

All corners of Britain may be filmed in a sympathetic manner. And with these films a large library may be built up to fill the great gap in the educational curriculum, and the blank spaces in all non-theatrical programmes.

**The closing date of the first contest, fixed for October 31st has, in response to many requests for more time, been put forward to November 30th.**

**Full particulars with regard to the Orient Line films will be given in the next issue.**

**For full particulars regarding the Amateur Services Club (announced in the May issue of World Film News) write to Miss Evelyn Spice, c/o World Film News, 9 Oxford Street, London, W.1.**

# *The Master Film for Sub-standard Movies*

**16 millimetre**

**8 millimetre**

**Black-and-White**

**Natural Colour**

**Silent**

**Sound**

In addition to the fact that the thoroughly comprehensive range of Ciné-Kodak Films provides a grade appropriate to every cine purpose—whether that be the filming of baby on the lawn, an amateur photo-play in colour, or an industrial selling "short"—there are other powerful arguments in its favour.

Ciné-Kodak Film is Reversal Film. In the course of processing, the negative image, formed from the larger grains of silver salt, is bleached out, leaving only the minute unexposed grains to form the positive image; *i.e.*, Cine-Kodak Film gives you a **finer-grained, clearer** screen image than non-reversal films of similar speed can possibly do.

With "Kodachrome" there is actually no grain at all in the processed film, the final image consisting only of pure transparent dyes.

Then again, those deviations from the theoretically correct exposure that are bound to occur from time to time are **automatically compensated for** during the processing of black-and-white Ciné-Kodak Film by a photo-electric cell device exclusive to Kodak. A substantial margin of error is thus permitted, and screen results are practically constant in brightness, quality and detail.

## *Here is the full range:*

**Ciné-Kodak Panchromatic Film** (16 mm.). The standard film for outdoor cinematography. Fine grained, fully colour sensitive.

**Ciné-Kodak Super Sensitive Panchromatic Film** (16 mm.). The film of lightning speed. Indispensable for artificial light work, and in weak daylight.

**Ciné-Kodak Eight Panchromatic Film** (8 mm. after processing). A superfine grained film, made specially for the Ciné-Kodak Eight. Gives full-sized screen pictures of sparkling quality.

**"Kodachrome" Film** (16 mm.). A full colour film without grain, "screen" or pattern of any kind. Requires no filters on camera or projector. Fast as Ciné-Kodak Panchromatic Film. Special Type "A" is available for use with "Photoflood" lighting.

**"Kodachrome" Eight Film** (8 mm. after processing). This year, colour movies are brought within reach of Ciné-Kodak Eight users. "Kodachrome" Eight has the same emulsion as the 16 mm. stock described above, but is specially perforated for the Ciné-Kodak Eight. Special "Kodachrome" Eight Type "A" is available for use with "Photoflood" lighting.

**16 mm. Sound Recording Film.** Perforated on one edge only. The following emulsions are available for sound recording with variable width and variable density systems.

Reversal Panchromatic Sound Recording.
"Kodachrome" Sound Recording.
"Kodachrome" Type "A" Sound Recording.

*Prices include processing and return postage.*

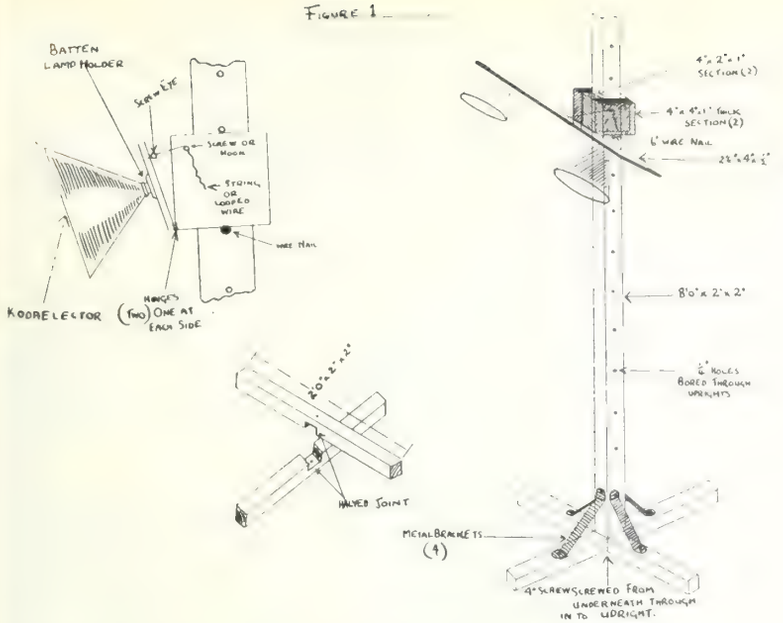
*From Ciné-Kodak Dealers, or write to Mr. W. F. Taylor, Dept. 57,*

KODAK LIMITED - KODAK HOUSE - KINGSWAY - LONDON, W.C.2.

# A Cheap Lighting Kit for Studio and Location

by G. R. COOPER

FIGURE 1



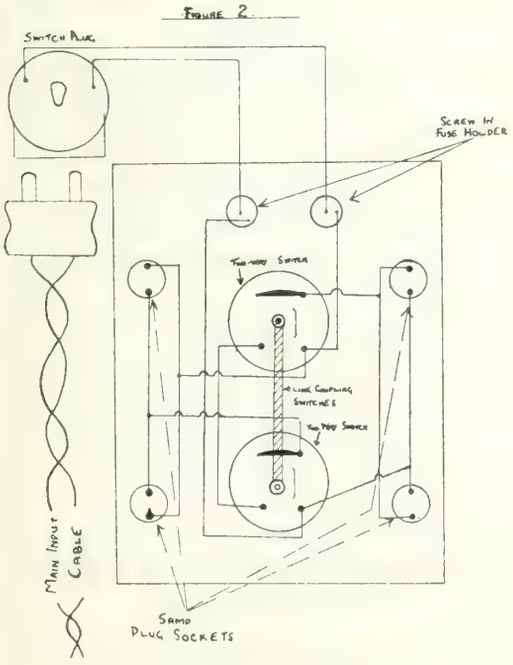

WITH the approach of the dark evenings most amateurs' thoughts will turn to the question of lighting equipment and it is the purpose of this article to describe a convenient and cheap outfit which can be used in the studio but which has sufficient flexibility to be easily transported for use on location.

The lighting scheme uses Photoflood lamps in reflectors mounting in pairs on uprights 8 ft. high. The mounting brackets can be raised, lowered or tilted to concentrate the light on any desired position. Figure 1 shows the construction and dimensions of the uprights and brackets.

In addition to the four stands carrying eight lamps provision is made for four, or more, extra lamps which can be mounted on single stands, such as the Kodak "Kodaflector" or "Ensign Multiflood" or as an alternative the lamps are simply fitted into reflectors and hung from cross wires when used for top-lighting any particular subject. Figure 4 shows the stands and one top-light in use during the production of the Ayr Film Unit's *Checkmate*. The top-light can be seen suspended to the left of the cameraman's head.

Any number of lamps between 2 and 20 (if funds permit) may be used, the only point being to ensure that your main cable has a maximum current-carrying capacity suitable for full loads and also that it is of sufficient size to avoid any undue voltage drop when using long extension leads from the main supply point.

FIGURE 2




The supply cable runs to a switching panel fitted into an attaché case where it connects *via* a plug and socket. From this point the wiring runs to two screw-in type fuse holders (fused according to the current taken). This can be easily calculated by allowing 1.0 amp. per Photoflood lamp.

From the fuse holders the wires go to two two-way switches linked together which are wired as in Figure 2 to allow the lamps to be switched on and used in series for heating the filaments and for all preliminary arranging of light and camera positions, the switch only being thrown over to parallel connections for exposure tests and actual shooting.

It should be noted here that this method of heating and burning the lamps in series is a means of greatly extending the life of the Photofloods. In the writer's experience the actual burning times were three hours at full voltage and about nine hours at half voltage when in series. So far only three out of twelve have burned out and it is hoped to get quite a bit more life from each of the remaining lamps. When one considers that the makers only rate these lamps for 2 hours intermittent burning the saving effected here is a very substantial item.

From the switch the wires run to four or more 5-amp. sockets and separate flexible leads for each lamp are plugged in by means of adaptors. Care is needed when plugging in the lamps to ensure that the same numbers are used from each side of the circuit as otherwise the lack of balance will be obvious when switching on by some of the lamps lighting at full intensity and others at half. However, tests with the switch in the 'Half' position will soon reveal any errors.

Figure 3 shows the wiring arranged for 6 lamps. It will be seen that two sockets and one plug connection are used in place of the two-way switches, as when the outfit was first constructed no switch of a suitable type and capacity was available. It is understood that these switches can now be obtained from Messrs. Crabtree.

Sundry accessories such as multiple plug adaptors, multiple Bayonet cap adaptors, B.C. to Plug adaptors and *vice versa* are included in the kit and are used for breaking into any one lead when there is insufficient flex to permit a direct lead from the switch-board. Various lengths of flex leads for lamp connections generally are included and a small notebook is kept permanently inside the case. In this all details of lighting are entered for each scene shot. Those of most importance are (1) Rough plan of the set with light positions, distances and approximate camera position. (2) Number of lamps used. (3) Actual burning time at full voltage.

For use on location away from the studio the apparatus is quickly dismantled and packed, all flexible wires and connectors being carried inside the switch case compartment. The reflectors are dismantled and packed in the original cartons as also are the lamps. The main input cable is coiled up and fastened with a rubber band.

If required the mounting brackets can be removed from the uprights and taken also as they take up very little extra space and they provide a means of concentrating the illumination, being held in the hand or rested on any convenient piece of furniture.

The cost of the outfit excluding lamps and reflectors is under £2. This investment will amply repay itself in the saving on the life of the lamps.

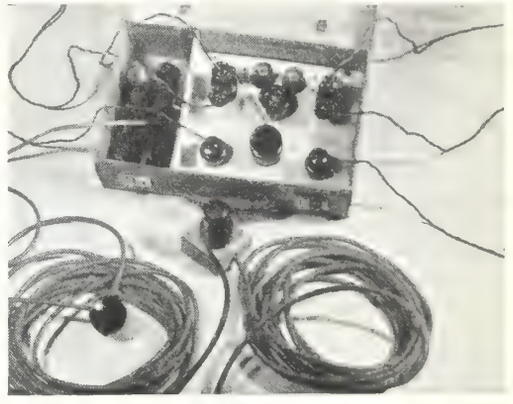


Fig. 3

Fig. 4

# *Technical Tit-Bits*

by DAVID MYERS

*Re* a perennial question that is always cropping up. Why is it that sometimes the wheels of motors, etc., appear stationary when obviously the vehicle is moving forward or backward on the screen? Sometimes the wheel spokes appear to be travelling backwards and sometimes forward, even standing still when the wheel is rotating in either direction at a much faster speed.

Briefly it is because the movement on the screen is not the rate of the moving wheel, and there is a differential between it and the frequency at which the pictures were photographed. Let us suppose that a 24-spoke wheel is revolving once a second, while the film photographing it is travelling at 24 pictures per second, each picture taken on the film will coincide exactly with the movement of the spoke, therefore there will be nothing to indicate its movement on the screen, when the spokes will appear to be stationary. From this it can be calculated what effect a slower or faster travelling wheel would have on the screen, when bearing in mind the speed of the camera operating on 24 or 16 picture speeds.

* * * *

"How can I remove the blackening from within the bulb of an old exciter-lamp," writes a reader of *W.F.N.*

Bring half a pint of methylated spirit mixed with one part of petrol to the boil on a gas ring, drop into the boiling spirit the exciter lamp together with one ounce of Lux. At the same time mention the name of your favourite flower and pray the Lord you will be granted—and the blackening complained of will immediately disappear.

* * * *

There are forty separate pictures to one foot of 16 mm. film and 16 separate pictures to one foot of 35 mm. But in one foot of 16 mm. there are only forty sprocket holes—one per picture, and on 35 mm. there are 128 sprocket holes per foot—eight for each picture. From this, you will realise the strain applied to the perforations on 16 mm. as compared to 35 mm.

* * * *

How often do you lubricate your projector? This most important factor is so often sadly neglected that it is no wonder the machine has a short life. Just a few seconds prior to the show, a drip here and a drip there will make all the difference to it, and believe me, will save you pounds in the long run. But do not oil the film gate, or any part of the mechanism where the film comes in contact, otherwise damage of another sort will result.

* * * *

A reader asks "Can I obtain glass beads for my plain white screen, and if so, how can I fix them?" You can obtain such beads from Winsor & Newtons or from Reeves, who are large manufacturers of artists' materials; but as to fixing them, I would suggest you leave that job to the experts. The fixative for the beads can also be purchased, but the real problem lies in the even distribution of them on the screen. Sometimes they are blown on through an electrical sprayer, sometimes dusted on, but it is the trade of a skilled worker.

* * * *

The action of a photo electric cell incorporated in the sound head of a film projector is that when light falls on the cathode, electrons are liberated which are in turn amplified by the gasfilling of the cell, and attracted to the anode to which a positive potential is applied.

* * * *

To arrive at the proper focal length of a cine lens to give a certain sized picture, divide the width of the screen into the projection "throw," *i.e.*, distance from lens to screen, and the focal length of the required lens will be given in inches.

* * * *

Don't be too sure that those broadcast "pips" do represent the *exact* time, for they may be seconds out. Not that the Greenwich signals are wrong or that there is any undue lag in transmission in the ordinary sense. At certain times of the year it is believed that the moon attracts the sound waves and in turn deflects them back to earth, so that in different places, as has been proved by a series of tests, it is delayed in transit to the extent of several seconds. That the moon is responsible, is beyond doubt.

* * * *

An ordinary film join, no matter how well made, causes an audible click or plop when passing through the sound gate, because the edges of the join overlap distorts the uniformity of the sound track, and produces unnatural noises.

The obvious way to overcome this is by blocking out the overlap on the sound track by painting it over with Movetone Neumade Ink. The blocking out should be of an irregular triangular shape with an apex which is not too sharp. The base should be $\frac{3}{8}$in. to $\frac{1}{2}$in. wide. A fine camel haired brush should be used for the operation, and spoilt attempts should not be remedied by the cutting out of another frame, but by the removal of the ink with Neumade Ink thinner. By the way, the blocking out of the join should be done on the base cellulloid or shiny side and *not* on the emulsion side.

* * * *

The darkening of rooms and halls is usually an expensive matter, but for the purpose of an occasional cinema performance it can be effectively and cheaply carried out by the use of what is commercially termed "pitch" wallpaper. This wallpaper has a white background and is treated with a black pitch coating for use as an undercoat to the final wallpaper covering, and if not stocked by your local merchant, can be ordered through him at a cost of approximately 1*s.* 2*d.* per roll. Each roll measures 36in. by 1ft. 9in.

It is positively non-porous to light, and pinned around windows, one such roll will cover a fairly good area. In sunny weather, any necessary overlaps of the papers on wide windows should be lapped in such a way as to allow any leakage of light to be thrown back toward the projector and *not* the screen. After the show the paper can be removed and rolled up again and stored for further use.

Photo-electric-cells should never be exposed to strong daylight as this considerably shortens their useful life. Usually they have a long life, but when dying, get noisy and harsh, or cause distortion of sound. If ever a blue glow is noticed within the cell, this points to excessive voltage and the manufacturers of the equipment should be informed who will then tell you as to what should be adjusted.

* * * *

Do not hang an electric light near the photo-electric-cell for in this way a hum is picked up through the light frequency falling into the cell. Often this light gets reflected into the cell in all manner of queer ways and the only way to trace whether it *is* reflected light is by excluding all light from the room.

* * * *

Watch those exciter lamps, see that the filaments are perfectly straight and reject any that are not strictly just so. Exciter lamps should be of the pre-focused type, and the filaments should be spring loaded. Modern exciter lamps of the kind described will give well over a hundred hours of useful life.

* * * *

Keep the surface of the exciter lamp clean and polished, too. Many extraneous noises originate from dirt.

* * * *

Keep your fingers off the sound track, for when dirty and greasy they will leave your imprint upon it. Commercial cinema operators at one time could tell who had handled their film previously by the various noises heard in the monitor loudspeakers from the operators' thumb marks.


**MOBILE RECORDING TRUCK**

Imperial Sound Studios' **MOBILE RECORDING UNIT** has now returned from location and is available for immediate use.

**Terms from £10 per day, fully equipped.**

Imperial Sound Studios are the leading people in the recording business and have the highest reputation for quality of sound.

**84 WARDOUR STREET**

GERRARD 1963

# Once upon a time . . . .

an ancient cave dweller drew crude bison on smoke-blackened walls . . . a tonsured monk illuminated a vellum manuscript . . . a skilled carver in wood brought pictures to the early textbooks . . . photography made them clearer.

And to-day, textbooks are supplemented by pictures that live, pictures that illustrate and make real the scenes of history, that move to the classroom the laboratories of science, that give civics and other studies new meaning, that unfold the world's knowledge on the motion picture screen for your children and ours to study. That talkies are a major step forward in teaching technique is a certainty.

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**SO THIS IS HOLLYWOOD** *by Leigh Aman*

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# world FILM news

## YOUR GUIDE to NEW and GENERAL RELEASE FILMS

AN INNOCENT IN HOLLYWOOD — TOD SLAUGHTER
HALF-AN-HOUR WITH PUDOVKIN — RUSSELL FERGUSON
CAGNEY—KING OF THE CORNER BOYS — JOHN GRIERSON
FROM NELL GWYN TO QUEEN VICTORIA — GLEN NORRIS
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**A FILM ABOUT MR THERM** Here he is in a new comedy, playing a detective part for the first time on the screen. Plenty of excitement and plenty of laughs, with music and a song which everybody will enjoy.

**POTS AND PLANS** It has been said that a woman walks 13 miles a day in her kitchen. This is now quite unnecessary. This film shows what you can do with your old kitchen to get everything within easy reach and made to suit your particular height.

**KENSAL HOUSE** Here is something entirely new in England. It is a model housing estate, complete with Nursery School and Tenants' Club, designed by five eminent architects. There are delightful pictures of the children in the Nursery School. Some of the tenants describe what life is like there and show you round the flats.

*and two new cooking films*

**HOW TO COOK** With Marcel Boulestin

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*Anyone who would like a film show arranged, or who wishes to borrow copies of the films, should write to the British Commercial Gas Association, 1 Grosvenor Place, S.W.1, if outside London, or the Gas Light and Coke Company, Horseferry Road, S.W.1, for London*

# "WHAT a THROAT for a RAZOR!"

# HOLD on to your SEATS

here comes

# TOD SLAUGHTER!

***Hissed, booed, cheered by gallery and pit all over Britain, last outstanding representative of the real peoples' theatre, Tod Slaughter talks to***

## RUSSELL FERGUSON

THIS will interest you.

In 1911 I had a farce running called *There and Back*, and do you know who were playing in it? Malcolm Keene, G. H. Mulcaster, and Leslie Banks. It was my company, *There and Back* was the farce.

When Leslie Banks first joined me, I tried to turn him into a low comedian in a farcical sketch called *The Hollow Baby*. It's a good job he had the sense to tell me I was wrong.

Ronald Colman was working for me in 1910, in a military drama called *Second to None*, and with him was Herbert Marshall.

That's how the top liners learned the business, in such companies as mine. Play anything: Ruritanian things, comedies, dramas, anything. The school of experience—an actor in the old days made no difference between one kind of play and another. Look them up, the top liners—Charlie Chaplin, the Barrymores, Ruth Chatterton, George Arliss, and you'll find they learned the business in the old school, acting in every sort of play. That's where they get their power of command, their timing, their technique, Evelyn Laye and Flora Robson and Robertson Hare and Stan Laurel and Paul Muni, and dozens more. Even take young Robert Donat, and you'll find he was with Sir Frank Benson about five or six years ago.

It was when I came back from the War that I looked round and decided to play drama. Yes, I suppose you can call them melodramas if you like. But I call them just dramas. I could see they would be forgotten unless somebody did something about it. Nobody was doing them, or likely to. I cut my teeth on them, nearly forty years ago, and from about 1905 till about 1909 I managed a company that did *Maria Marten*, *No Mother to Guide Her*, *A Warning to Women*, *A Wrecker of Men* and *The Seal of Silence*. We did a 48-week tour, and we never left a theatre without booking a return date. So I knew all the old plays, and after the war I put them on at the Elephant and Castle. The people loved them. Visitors began to come from the West End. I had distinguished people every other night. Some of them candidly said they came for amusement, but one and all they forgot to laugh.

They were making discoveries. They found that this was good, they were enjoying it. They found that melodrama was damned good drama, and they felt the power of the company. It was like a drug, and they yielded to it. They began to see that this old stuff is not just something antique, left over from last century. They began to make comparisons, some of them, and to see that it's very much alive, in fact, it will never die. The situations, the lines, the real theatre, can be seen undiluted in the old plays, and these are the elements that give the theatrical thrill in the modern plays.

Take Edgar Wallace—he came over to the Elephant. I had a box for him, but he would not sit in it. I had to go up and shift four people out of the front row of the gallery, for him and his party.

He got up on the stage at the finish and told us why. He said, "The first coppers I earned, selling newspapers as a boy, were spent on a seat in the gallery of the Elephant."

Doesn't that show how Edgar Wallace learned what to write for the stage? And what did he write—*The Frog*, *The Ringer*, *The Squeaker*, *On the Spot*—thrillers, they call them. Tip-top stuff too. Why aren't they called melodramas? If I put on *The Frog*, old boy, in my own way, people would say "Tod Slaughter at it again."

EDGAR Wallace saw that West End theatre was hitting the slide. He knew what people want, the real theatrical thrill; crime and punishment, mystery, the villain brought to justice, the elements of his plays were in the old tradition. His exits and curtains, the technique of the writing, the acting, the production, all in the old tradition. Edgar Wallace knew how to create dramatic thrills. He learned all the recipes in his youth. He cooked the stuff up a bit, with comedy and so on, I served it up raw, but it's the same stuff.

The theatre went all to pot, after the War, the characters all sat about and talked, it was all cocktails and cigarettes. It was amusing and witty, but the drama was dying on its feet. Edgar Wallace went right back to the main stream, pistol shots, the shadows of the noose, the scream in the dark, fear and suspicion, the good old plum-duff.

What about Noel Coward, didn't he do the same thing? What's *Cavalcade*? You can hardly call it melodrama, but what else is it? It's revue and a spectacle, but it's the drama in it that gives it the kick.

## *Tod Slaughter (contd.)*

Take Ivor Novello, who's just done it again with *The Crest of the Wave*. He's about the best example of the lot. He puts on four big successes one after the other, and we wonder how he does it. It's simple. They're musical thrillers, that means they are melodramas with music and comedy. The hero, the villain, the sweetheart, the inheritance, or the jewels, it's the good old stuff. When you should call it drama and when you should call it melodrama, I don't know. I suppose it depends on how it's diluted, with music or with discussion or with comedy. I suppose when you take it neat, you call it melodrama. Anyway it's the same stuff.

GEORGE Arliss came into the Elephant, and when he came round he said, "Number one dressing room? You aspire, old boy, you aspire. Take me to number seven, I never got further than that." So I did, and he said, "You have five fellows dressing here, I see. When I was here there were seven places. And my place was just here," he said, pointing to a chair, "and I earned twenty-five bob a week."

I loved him for that. He knew the value of experience, he was proud of it. He knows drama. God knows how much he's made out of *The Green Goddess*, and that's the good old stuff, as ever was. You remember the first film he appeared in, or about the first. It was away back in 1924. He was the villain. He was killed at the end, and you saw the flames devour his soul. But at the beginning, the scene is the Louvre, and the hero and heroine are looking at the pictures. They pass a small round-shouldered figure in a black cloak, peering close into a picture, quizzing it through a glass. He turns round and smiles a lovely smile. He looks like Satan. You are scared out of your wits, but you can't take your eyes off him. You never can, whether he is the lawyer or the doctor or the general. He takes command, right from the moment when he sails in and says "Ah, my dear duchess, how are you?" He knows his job because he learned it in the old hard school, and he plays it in the old style, and he's terrific, and everybody loves him.

No side. There's no side about the top liners who started at the bottom. Herbert Marshall has my photo on his dressing table, and I'll tell you why. After the war he came into my office in khaki, on crutches. He said "Tod, I'm finished." I said "What's the matter, Herbert?" He said, "Well, look at me. I'll never act again. Lost a leg." "So I see," I said, "but you're getting another one, aren't you?" "Oh, yes," he says, "but what's the use of an actor with a wooden leg? John Silver is about all I'm fit for." I said "Don't be silly, Herbert. Come back here immediately your leg's fitted."

Well, he did, and I put him straight into a farce called *Betsy*, which opened in the Richmond Hippodrome. He had to get about, in this show, up stairs and down stairs. Well, he made a hit. He told me the first round of applause set him up. From that moment, he knew it was a go. And that's why he has my photo on his dressing table.

I've just finished filming *The Ticket of Leave Man*. It's a lovely film. In one scene I have Marie Wright with me. I'm just out, and working a con trick, collecting for the Prisoners' Aid Society. Marie plays the dear old lady whom I separate from her money: easy for her, for Marie's a dear old lady if ever there was one. Well, when we shoot, I have a beautiful oily speech, and Marie says, "You've touched my 'eart." "Cut," says George King, who was directing. "Sorry," says Marie, "not like me to drop an aitch, I forgot the character." "That's all right, dear," I said, "these things are soon remedied in this business. You get as many shots as you like." We shot the whole thing again, and of course Marie was perfect. She turns to George King, and says, "Mr. King, had I an 'eart just now, or had I a heart?" "Marie," says George, "you had a beautiful, kind, loving heart."

Jimmie Turner, Jack Buchanan's manager, tells an 'eart story about Beerbohm Tree. Turner used to be with him. Sir Herbert had Herbert Waring in his company for a show, a grand old actor of the old school. Waring sees the proof of the playbill and goes quietly to Tree. "Herbert," he says in his richest tones, "I have just seen what purports to be the playbill of this show. I notice that, except your own, all the names are exactly the same size. Now, having regard to my experience——" Tree said, "Sorry, Herbert, but it would only cause jealousy." "Then do you think you could print my name last, with the word 'and'—you know—so and so, so and so, so and so, so and so *And* Herbert Waring?" Tree says, "Herbert, it's 'ard to give the 'and where the 'art could never be."

I was never with Tree. I have played Shakespeare with Clive Currie and I've played in every other kind of play. I've broadcast and televised and made records, and I've produced about 380 plays myself, 27 pantomimes, 3 revues, 57 sketches. I've been the dame in a pantomime and the clown in a circus ring.

I'M fifty-three. How old are you? Really? Well, you're lucky you're not a few years younger, for if you had been born a little later you would probably have been a sissy, like the rest of the young chaps nowadays. In one company recently I had several young men. Clever, talented, smart, willing, charming fellows—the only trouble was they were all sissies. They were no use. They could do everything but get tough. At the finish up, I had to get down to it myself. I got down to about thirty-two, not bad for a man of fifty-three. I was supposed to be twenty-eight.

The revival of the old popular dramas after the war is what I regard as my most important work—I always play them straight, you know, I have never burlesqued them. That would be madness. *Young England* did me a great deal of harm. Here was I doing a double job, providing the people with real meat, and at the same time carrying the clever ones along with the rest. Playing the old stuff sincerely, and succeeding. Along comes *Young England*, they play it for laughs, and knock me back five years. But *Young England* died a natural death, and *Sweeney Todd* lives a natural life. I'm just back from five months in Manchester doing rep. All the old favourites. They loved it. Now you can't keep on, and keep on keeping on, unless you have the stuff.

I'll tell you a funny thing. You know that American paper which runs star-popularity ballots? Well, I've got a number! Me, Sweeney Tod Slaughter, the demon actor. I have a number. They've only seen two of my pictures.

Wait till you see *The Ticket of Leave Man*. A lovely film.

**Tod Slaughter, in the George King production,** *Ticket of Leave Man*

# EDITORIAL

## *The grip on criticism*

An article on another page draws attention to the action of Columbia Pictures in banning the critic of the *Film Weekly* from Columbia shows. At a time when the position of American film companies is under Parliamentary review, this is an event of some interest. The *Film Weekly* is easily the best of the fan magazines, with a reputation for independent criticism rare among commercial film journals. Time and again it has earned the respect of this paper for its public spirit and its courage. Indeed it is well equipped to watch the interests of the British film going public and in this sense it may be said to play an important national role. Through such a paper the British public is guided as to what is best and what is worst in American films and alien influences can be estimated and kept in good order.

It is curious, to say the least, that so important an organ should be prevented from carrying out its task. We have seen the uproar which attended the ban on *The Times* correspondent in Berlin; yet here is the more grotesque case of a foreign organisation banning an organ of British public opinion, and on our own territory. We do not question but that more will be heard of it when Parliament meets.

The larger issue is of course that free criticism is, by one method or another, being prevented throughout the film world. The trade's hospitalities tend to weaken the fibre of the critic and the arguments which emanate from the advertising columns are seldom less than weighty. Frequently we hear of film renters threatening to take their complaints about unfavourable criticisms "to higher quarters"; and even Lord Beaverbrook allowed himself to be licked on such an issue when, because of a Belfrage comment, advertising was withdrawn from the *Sunday Express*.

## *In Newcastle*

Up in the sad town of Newcastle, they have been cutting the credits on the short films. Main title and on you go, without a word for the people who worked, more or less laboriously, to give the theatres this relief element in their programmes. A Mr. Dixon Scott, manager of the Haymarket theatre, writes to Newcastle's *Evening Chronicle* to defend this mutilation of short films, and says that "not one person in a hundred cares a rap about these credits."

Perhaps so. But one person quite certainly does and that is the film-maker. It is his mark and his vanity, and the tradition of all showmanship, whether in painting, publishing, or the theatre, regards these marks and vanities as proper and necessary to creative work. In the disconsolate business of making films for such as Mr. Dixon Scott, the poor film-maker must have something to nerve him.

One practical point is worth taking. Commercial film operators are an unimaginative lot if they do not take as much pride in their shorts as they do in their features; and poorer still if they cannot see the future advantage of building up young reputations. Shorts producers should, in any case, look to their interests by contracting on a no-cut basis and seeing to it that contracts are kept. The recognition of their work and their commercial advantage depend on it. They have the further method open to them of keeping their films out of any theatres which treat them so ill. A thoughtless fellow, this Mr. Dixon Scott.

## *Lobbying*

Four months ago we described the circumstances under which the British Films Advancement Movement was formed. We had some doubts as to whether Parliamentary Committees should put themselves under the suspicion of being financed from commercial sources and asked specifically that the financial backing behind the promotion of this Movement should be revealed. We have received no answer and in fact this Advancement Movement has been singularly inactive since our article appeared.

Lest there be any mistake, we must again raise this question of principle and ask if Parliamentary groups should put themselves in the position of receiving funds from commercial sources. It is becoming one of the observations of Wardour Street that Members of Parliament are not unwilling to undertake Parliamentary lobbying for particular film groups; and the advances do not always come from the film people.

We do not say there is dishonesty in this; and Members of Parliament must be free to lobby for what they believe. But the more we think of our legislators tied—by war or any other chests—to particular interests, the more disagreeable do the possibilities appear.

* * * *

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# World Film News

AND TELEVISION PROGRESS
(INCORPORATING CINEMA QUARTERLY)

Vol. 2 No. 7 October 1937


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Cover Still: Shirley Temple in *Wee Willie Winkie*

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# AN INNOCENT IN HOLLYWOOD

## by Thomas Baird

"ONE return ticket to Hollywood."

"You mean to Los Angeles don't you?"

"No, I'm going to Hollywood. What's wrong with that?"

"Nothing much with the return bit! But you can't take a ticket to Hollywood."

"Why not?"

"Because there ain't no station there."

True, the train goes no further than Los Angeles.

It gallops down from the mountains and streaks across the desert. It pushes past orange groves where the fruit hangs ripening in the sun. The sun is always shining in California. Rain is most unusual. There are palm trees in the streets of Pasadena. There are eucalyptus trees by the railroad. Soon you can feel a city approaching. Houses creep down to the railway line. Then factories. A chimney or two. Some smoke and a little dirt. We rush between high buildings. Los Angeles.

There are still six miles to Hollywood. It is dusk as the taxi turns into Hollywood Boulevard; the sky is growing dark but there is a blaze of light from a dozen cinemas, from the shop windows, from the hotels, from the electric signs. It is like a fairground. I like fairgrounds at night time.

Out of the taxi the air is warm and dry; the sky is like velvet and search-lights scar it like silver brocade.

Next morning I rush to my hotel window. It is raining. A heavy Scots mist. This is most unusual for California. There is no sun, just a grey bank of mist hiding the hills and making last night's fairground look even more sad than a fairground usually looks in the morning. Eight hours later it is still raining. Eight days later it is still raining. This is most unusual. On the ninth day it clears up. It takes a most unusual wind to perform the feat. The sun comes out, yellow first, then blinding white. Colour creeps back into the landscape. Coloured awnings drop over windows. Billboards gleam in their true blues and reds. Egyptian temples announce that Garbo loves Taylor; Chinese pagodas tell the world A Star is Born; windows open and radios blare out; the fair is on again. I expect to wake each morning and find that it has been rolled up and taken on to the next town.

* * *

"Where can I park this car while I have some food?"

"If you drive another hundred yards you won't need to park your car. You'll find a drive-in."

"A what?"

"A drive-in. You know, sit in the car and have your food brought to you. Saves a lot of time."

"Saves who a lot of time: me or the waitress?"

"All depends how you look at it and what your aim in life is."

* * *

They make films in Hollywood when the sun shines but it is difficult to know which are the "sets" and which the hotels and restaurants. You get better food in the studios than you do in the restaurants and the studios look more like hotels than the restaurants look like restaurants. Everything looks like a set except a set. It is really very difficult.

* * *

"Let's go and see a film."

"What's on?"

"Janet Gaynor . . . Marlene Dietrich . . . the Marx Brothers . . ."

"Anything you say."

"Oh, I know a place: let's go to the drive-in."

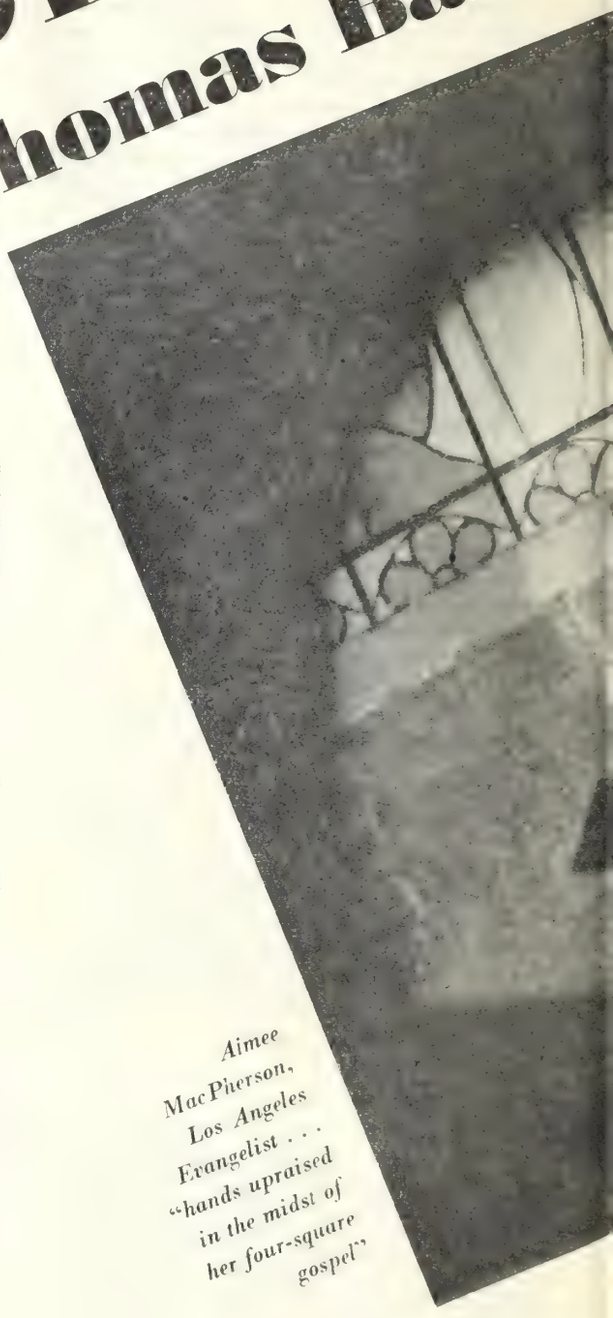
"I've had enough food."

"No, no, the 'drive-in cinema.' "

"What's on?"

"Don't know: but it's fun."

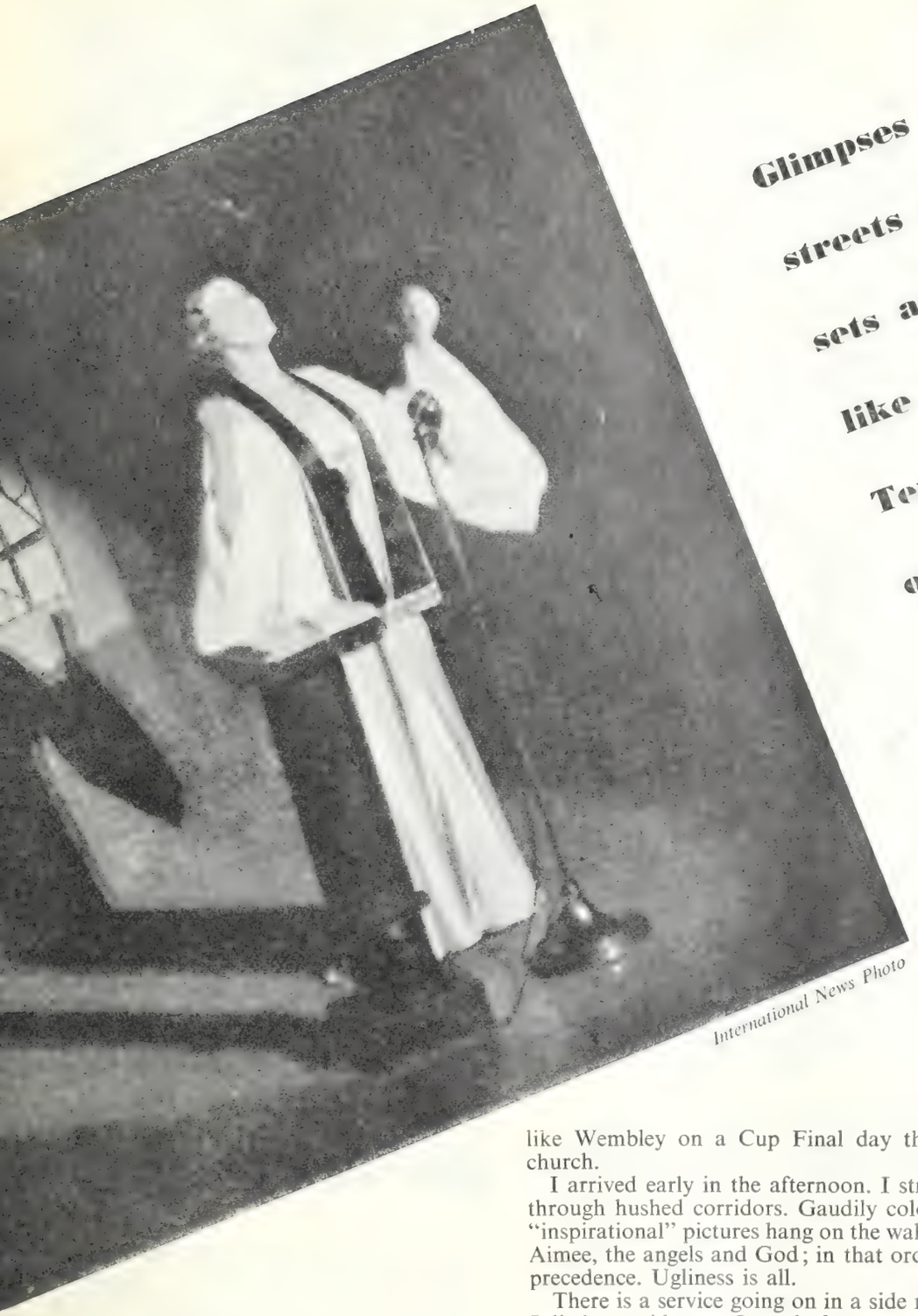
So I drive in for the second time.



*Aimee MacPherson, Los Angeles Evangelist . . . "hands upraised in the midst of her four-square gospel"*

This time it is to a huge parking place. It is quite dark and we are guided by a uniformed figure with a torch. There is an enormous screen hanging in the air. This is the drive-in cinema. The floor is slightly raked so that we can look out through the wind-screen in comparative comfort. The two in the back seat are not so comfortable. The figures on the screen are mouthing but I cannot hear a word. I open the side window of the car and

**Glimpses of drive-ins, streets that look like sets and sets that look like streets, Aimee MacPherson's Temple, and the extras on the sidewalk**



*International News Photo*

"Everything is going to be all right" comes in from the side. Loud speakers scarcely concealed in the aisles feed in the sound at right angles to the screen. Disembodied spirits fight desperately to regain their shadowy selves upon the screen. I give up before they do. I don't yet know what was on. But it's fun.

* * *

WHEN the tinselled temples of China and Egypt begin to pall there is still the Angelus Temple. It is one of the sights of Los Angeles and is always recommended on a wet afternoon. It is almost impossible to get in on a Sunday, for the devotees of Aimee Semple MacPherson line the streets hours before the service. Even with a first nighter's privilege of entry by a special early door it is still more like Wembley on a Cup Final day than a church.

I arrived early in the afternoon. I strolled through hushed corridors. Gaudily coloured "inspirational" pictures hang on the walls . . . Aimee, the angels and God; in that order of precedence. Ugliness is all.

There is a service going on in a side room. I slip into a side seat. On a platform a preacher is talking in soft tones. There is a hush over his audience. He drums his desk softly: "God is love, God is love." The audience murmurs: "Amen, Amen." He starts to pace the platform. His feet beat a tattoo. The sun is shining in a window. "God is love, God is love." "Amen, Amen." The preacher drums on his desk. I feel the drumming in my stomach.

I start when he shouts: "Hallelujah!" He dances across the platform. He says God is in his feet. The audience screech: "Hallelujah!" The tattoo of his feet quickens. The sun is shining brightly in at a window. A woman falls off her chair and rolls in the passage. A man bursts into tears. A woman stands rigid and speaks in a strange language. A man starts laughing hysterically. My stomach is throbbing. "God is love, God is love: Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen."

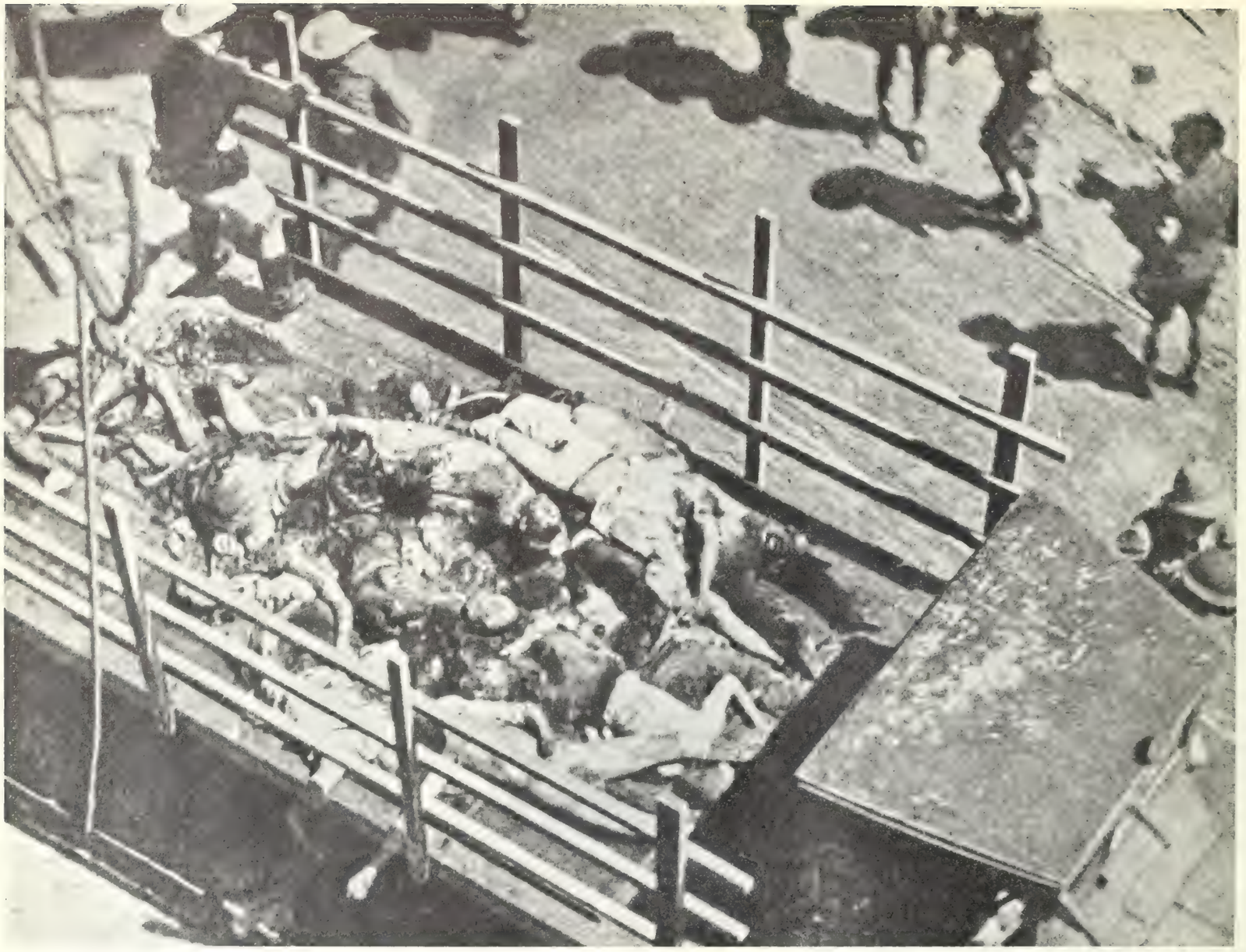
The preacher points at me and shouts: "Relax! Relax and God can do anything." He throws his arms in the air and heaves his waistcoat above the trouser line. He is wearing a belt and braces. This seems like a breach of faith. "Only relax and God can do anything." I try to laugh but the laugh sticks in my throat. The preacher is dancing fanatically now. The woman next me has fallen on the floor. She is convulsive and is sobbing: "Jesus, Jesus." My heart is thumping. I'm scared stiff. I run from the building in terror. Back to Hollywood, back to the fairground where hokum is hokum and is called by no other name.

* * *

A blazing sun beats fiercely down from a cloudless sky. The sidewalks sizzle. The blue hills quiver in the shimmery light. Palm trees wilt. It is noon on Hollywood Boulevard.

Tough looking guys . . . extras, I am told in a whisper . . . lounge against the shop fronts. I have seen their like in colder climes and would have been sure that they were the Unemployed. But here they are extras. Magnificent limousines slide down the roadway; on the sidewalk badly made up women with dull blonde hair perspire in red pyjamas. They are extras; some of them lead children by the hand.

I go into a drug store out of the heat. The man sitting on the next stool asks me for a match. I recognise a face I have seen in a thousand films. I do not know his name. I never did know his name. But in a way he was quite famous though nobody knew his name. There is a greasy stain just above his hat band; there are practically no heels on his shoes; he is an extra now. He pays a nickel for his drink and leaves no tip.



# "UNCENSORED—you are going

THOSE words, or others expressing the same idea, flashed on to Britain's newsreel screens last month, as the only warning before cinema audiences were plunged into a blood bath of the full horror of the Sino-Japanese war. Since the start of the present fighting, Paramount had been working up a crescendo of gruesome pictures, which often included long-shots of dead bodies. Few people could have imagined to what peak of visual horror all this was finally to lead.

Almost as if they had come to a private agreement beforehand, Paramount and Universal suddenly and simultaneously released the most amazing shots of what war means to the flesh it tortures, that the screen has ever shown.

Women and children flee from the bombardment of Shanghai's International Settlement. Great columns of smoke rise where death has fallen. Shambled streets—cars burning—the dust slowly blows away—revealing the full horror of the aftermath. A Chinese girl, smart in Western clothes, finds the pavement blocked with a jig-saw of dead bodies. She pauses for a second, pulls her skirts up above her knees—takes a series of high, long strides—hurries down the road. A man lies in the corner, his head propped against a doorstep—he waves languidly at the camera—from at least a dozen wounds the bright blood literally "pours" down his face, arms and body.

Rescue squads work with handkerchiefs tied round their mouths. They carry the wounded away on stretchers. They disentangle one body that has got all mixed up with an iron shutter. Then they turn their attention to the stinking human garbage. Great chunks of flesh are thrown into a huge open lorry. As it drives away, the cargo wobbles gently, like a dark streaked blancmange.

The extraordinary impact of these pictures is not due entirely to the horror of the shots. There is an utter realism about them of a type that has probably never before been seen in any newsreel in any country. There is no attempt to improve the sequences by smart cutting—no consecutive line of thought—just a wild looking hither-and-thither with the camera men, to whom fate had given the ghastly job of reporting what they saw.

There were three of them who were in range when the bombs fell. George Krainukov of Universal, who a few days before had had his camera shot out of his hand in the Chinese evacuation of Peiping, was within hailing distance. A Paramount man had arrived from the U.S. only a few hours before. There was also Harrison Forman of the *March of Time*.

For the men attached to the other reels, it was just a case of "hard luck." Movietone's

# o be shocked but this is WAR!"

*By* **GLEN NORRIS**

Bonney Powell, was fully occupied elsewhere, arguing with the Japanese authorities, who were refusing to allow him complete freedom in his roaming. The Pathé News man missed the Clipper Plane with his material, the next plane did not leave for another week, and a week kills even a five-star newsreel story.

These facts explain why Paramount and Universal were alone in releasing the uncensored pictures; may explain also the ear-splitting howl that was immediately raised by rival editors.

Rushed to the press was a statement by Jeffrey Bernerd, top boss of Gaumont-British News:

"I disagree entirely with Mr. Cummins, Editor of Paramount News. It is the duty of the newsreels to present news, but not to put on the screen material for a political purpose.

"The exhibitors of this country run their theatres with the idea of entertaining the public.

"To show the ghastly destruction of human beings in the most horrific form is, I contend, letting down the exhibitor.

"I hold that fifty per cent of the exhibitors of this country—and that is putting it very mildly—would never show those films if they had seen them."

Thus was raised once again the old be-whiskered argument of Entertainment *v.* Realism. An argument that has served too long as an excuse for the unmitigated dullness of British newsreels.

Newsreel executives, exhibitors, and cinemaddicts who expressed complete agreement with Mr. Bernerd's arguments, failed to realise the close parallel between the present position of the newsreels and that of the Press about forty years ago. Then, too, critics were saying that the object of a newspaper was merely to entertain the "ladies and gentlemen of quality," that anything "unsavoury" would lead the Press towards its doom.

the public these terrors and horrors, so that people themselves can see that it's no drawing-room entertainment but stark realism in all its grimmest and most horrible truth.

"I've always contended the newsreels should do their job—and this is one of them—however dreadful it may appear on the screen.

"I think the newsreel companies are performing their proper duty in telling the truth of the terrors and horrors of the raid on Shanghai. I definitely think, it's time they acted up to their title—and showed actual news."

Sample letter published by *The Cinema:*

"Mr. Bernerd . . . implies that cinemas are run for entertainment only. But if the showing of such films can play the smallest part in averting the calamities of war, surely no argument can outweigh this consideration?

"According to Einstein, if only one man in every six liable to military service refused to fight, war would be impossible. Films showing all the terrifying realities of contemporary warfare, could do much towards making such a dream an actuality."

Meanwhile, *To-Day's Cinema* headlined: "Newsreels Give Anti-War Lead—The Real Facts—Courageous National Service—A Lesson for the Public." While in less noisy, but equally emphatic ways, hundreds of thousands of cinemaddicts showed their approval by flocking to see the pictures—by talking about them—by proving that a finely handled, bravely edited, newsreel story can jump right out of the "thrown-in-with-the-big-picture" class; can take its rightful place in a cinema programme.

And to Paramount's Cummins and Universal's Jeapes, go the well-merited congratulations of every serious cinemaddict in the country. For shining a spotlight of hope into a dark and dull corner of the film world: for releasing some of the most potent anti-war propaganda of the twentieth century.

*"Human garbage . . ."*

*"Human flesh wedded to wood . . ."*

*"Street Cleaners, bandages round mouths . . ."*

ONE point in Jeffrey Bernerd's letter, quoted above, was almost immediately proved wrong. Far from fifty per cent of the exhibitors cutting out the Shanghai pictures, most of them found such a rush of cinema-goers specially to see the newsreel, that by the second day of showing, the latter became almost the star feature of the programme. In the big cities, news theatres featured "The Shanghai Horror Film" and in general, the favourable effect on the box-office is likely to kill once and for all the argument that "the public won't stand for it anyway."

Meanwhile, from all quarters came defence of the far-sighted courage of Paramount's Editor G. T. Cummins and Universal's Cecil Jeapes. Sample editorial by Editor Ernest Fredman, of the *Daily Film Renter*:

"After I'd viewed them, I felt unhesitatingly these pictures ought to be shown. Personally, I think it time newsreels showed

**One of the 500 bombed Refugees . . . Corner of Thibet and Edward VII Avenue**

# NELL GWYN to

# QUEEN VICTORIA

THE history of the reign can be a great nuisance to a director who has only two hours to tell the story of a great sovereign's life. Alexander Korda solved the problem neatly in *Henry VIII* by means of his main title, *The Private Life of Henry VIII*, which allowed him to leave the history out (though you will remember he brought in the foreign policy at the point where Henry said, "I must go and attend to France and Germany," leaving Ann to the attentions of Culpepper). Herbert Wilcox is not so happy in his title, so that the history of England becomes a sort of King Charles's head constantly butting into a pleasant account of a queen's love-life.

After the wedding, for instance, Miss Neagle and Mr. Walbrook go off in a railway train. This is the progress of science and engineering. Peelers and Bobbies are in attendance. This is the social progress of the age. While Mr. Walbrook makes her jealous with a little by-play, Miss Neagle discusses the Income Tax and the Penny Stamp. This is the development of Inland Revenue and Postal Services. A mob storms the palace gates. This is the working classes. Miss Neagle says, "Can such things be?" This is humanitarianism. By and by Miss Neagle reads a book by Mr. Dickens. This is literature.

But the biggest problem of all comes with the death of Miss Neagle's consort. That is the end of the love-life, and the reign is just beginning. To find that your film has died on you in the middle of the history must be a great blow. Mr. Wilcox finds the remedy ready to hand, in fact it has been his standby since the first reel. Subtitles.

A subtitle disposes of the long retirement (The Widow of Windsor), another gets rid of Imperial Expansion, and so on to the Diamond Jubilee. Between the opening subtitles (June 21st, 1837, Kensington Palace, Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, Dover, etc.), and the concluding subtitles, lies the love-story, helped out by occasional captions, The Hungry Forties, Balmoral, Constitution Hill, St. Paul's, A long Period of Peace Followed, etc. The scenes are all static, with the exception of some horses at the beginning and some schoolboys in the middle. The later scenes are in brilliant red, blue and green. *Victoria the Great* thus becomes a kind of lantern-show.

This effect fits the period in a strangely fascinating way. The dullness of the film produces the same world-weariness as the old woodcuts of the Great Exhibition, family albums, pictures of the new gasworks 1877. The colour scenes are just like the old oleographs and coloured postcards.

The film is very bad indeed. As the young Queen, Anna Neagle is far too beautiful to maintain any illusion, yet the nature of the role gives her no scope for her sparkling vivacity. She is neither Victoria nor herself. As the film goes on and the make-up gets heavier and heavier, she becomes less and less Anna Neagle without getting any nearer to a likeness of the Queen. The final version is the one which, the press told us, called forth spontaneous applause from the crowd in the studio. A glance at any of the stills will show how bad it is, a horribly bloated face with

eyelids propped half shut, and paint-marks on the chin. Perhaps it was because it was so bad that the press said it was so good. She is photographed unmercifully, sometimes her maltreated face gleams with running grease. The crude make-up and harsh photography stultifies all her work. At the death of the Prince she has no chance at all, with a camera staring straight into her distorted face.

Anton Walbrook is luckier. He has the good fortune to die in his own likeness. He is quite a credible Albert, making a real and manly figure out of the somewhat shadowy Prince. The part suits him. But what a waste of Anna Neagle, who was Nell Gwyn, and Peg of Old Drury, and broke Leslie Banks's heart in *The Three Maxims*.

Well, Nell Gwyn was not married to Charles II, and Mr. Hays shut Miss Neagle's film out of America on that account. Mr. Wilcox has seen to it that this will not happen again. He has cast her as the prototype of wifely devotion and domestic virtue, and just to make quite sure, he has taken all the life and sparkle out of her, and spoiled her beautiful face with wax and gum and grease. The resulting effigy is about as capable of expression as a dummy from Madame Tussaud's, and a good deal less convincing. Will Hays should be pleased.

BUT the film will be a great success, particularly in America. The Americans will travel for miles and pay handsomely for pictures of England, Ireland and Scotland. They flocked to Korda's film to see Hampton Court Palace, the King's Banqueting Hall, the Hunting and Hawking. They flocked to *Tudor Rose*. They flocked to *Wings of the Morning* to see Killarney's lakes and fells, and to hear John McCormack sing to them. They will flock to *Victoria the Great* to see Buckingham Palace, Kensington Palace, Constitution Hill, Windsor Castle, and the reconstructions of Victoria's drawing room. If *Victoria the Great* had been about Christina of Sweden or Catherine of Russia or Marie Antoinette of France, it would have been laughed off Broadway for its production values. But it is about Victoria of England and it will go over big, and make a lot of money, and probably lay the foundations of the next crash by starting the next boom.

Judged by commercial standards, the film is a masterly production. It comes at the end of Coronation Year, when the bells have scarcely ceased to echo. It has Abbey scenes in which the Archbishop of Canterbury says "Look down upon this thy servant our Queen," with a great deal about "undoubted Queen of this realm," answered antiphonally with "God Save the Queen," just like the broadcast. Choirboys sing. Guns go off. Bands. The crowd outside the Palace sing the National Anthem. The band plays "God Save the Prince of Wales" when the baby comes. Herbert Wilcox has made a kind of coronation-cum-jubilee newsreel, built a love-story into it, stuck in the Repeal of the Corn Laws and a few other historical high-lights, and coloured the last reel. It is likely to be very popular in this country. It is sure to be a money-spinner in America.

YET it is a very bad film. But it will succeed. How is this? The success of a bad film is as great a puzzle as the failure of a good one. It seems there are some feelings and prejudices which are deeper than criticism. At a Prom Concert, the singer will give a couple of Brahms lieder, or a Schubert group, and the people will applaud till he comes back. He will then sing "The Trumpeter." The people will applaud till their hands are sore. Or it may be some sickly Irish or Scottish ballad. It is hard to believe that the same people are applauding. Perhaps it is not the same people, but other people clapping the same hands.

In the same way, no doubt, a connoisseur may sneer at a masterly etching which does not please his taste, and yet weep over a hideous oleograph of the place where he was born.

So if Mr. Wilcox wishes to pursue his success let him be sure of his ground. Let him put British films on the map with Yon Bonny Banks and Yon Bonny Braes, Ilkley Moor Baht 'at, We Don't want to Fight but by Jingo if we Do, She's my Ladylove, Knocked 'em in the Old Kent Road, the Soldiers of the Queen, Land of Hope and Glory, Kathleen Mavourneen, and Blaydon Races.

That is our métier.

**Russell Ferguson**

**"Shut out of America . . ."**

**"The Americans will travel for miles . . ."**

# Movies With a Mission

DEAR BRUCE WOOLFE,

It is rather delicate for a film director to advise on the subject of religious films. His practical knowledge of cinema audiences may hurt the sponsors, who, possibly, have a certain amount of idealistic feelings on the matter.

The few religious films I have seen were very poor. They had all the shortcomings of the amateur production—coarse acting, poor photography, no sense of "tempo," no knowledge of dramatic development.

I understand that in the new scheme the matter is going to be handled by professionals; and this alone is a guarantee of a definite improvement in its technical qualities.

But the real problem doesn't lie there. It is a problem of general style for the chosen subjects, a rather intricate and exceedingly interesting one, which the producer will have to solve.

It seems to me that the following two main points should be made clear before the start of practical work: firstly, the composition of the programmes, and secondly the amount of "preaching" expected from the films.

It is obvious that no audience, even a church audience, can cope with a succession of three or four two-reelers dealing exclusively with morals and goodness. The case is much the same as in the straight educational field. In schools the films do not take the teacher's place, and therefore in the churches they will not replace the pulpit.

A documentary, possibly with a religious interest, followed by the dramatic short such as Tolstoi's *Where Love is, God is*, and finally, a cartoon (or, why not a comedy?) would be the best composed programme for a religious film-show.

Now, referring to the amount of "preaching" contained in each film, I strongly suggest that in most cases comments from the organisers should supply the moral and religious teaching. This would lighten the burden of the film and improve its entertainment value.

I am perfectly aware, on the other hand, that very often a fair amount of exhibitionism is highly appreciated by religious audiences (such things as the amazing growth of the Oxford Group is the best possible example); but, I reckon that in your case you are not willing to encourage this taste. Therefore, too much loud praying on the screen, too many eyes lifted to the skies, should be avoided, as well as too much preaching. Public religious outbursts would require, in any case, great actors, and I believe that with your actual budgets you can't afford them.

The here-proposed straightforward exposition of a story on the screen would enable the film-images to appeal to the imagination of the audience in the simplest, liveliest style. This would give your shows the level of restraint and decency you are after, and, finally, would lead your whole scheme to succeed in a true religious way.

I hear that you might consider some modern "transcriptions" of biblical subjects.

I must confess that I can't imagine the Prodigal Son returning home on an old bike,

**In a letter written to Bruce Woolfe, Alberto Cavalcanti discusses problems connected with the use of film for religious purposes.**

**Argues that subjects like the Reformation in England would be most effective religious subjects for realist film-makers.**

nor a Joseph in tweeds giving Hitler a few cryptic and frightening warnings. . . .

On the other hand I think that an adaptation, say of Debussy's "L'Enfant Prodigue," could be quite an interesting experiment.

I also think that one or two of the very simple stories (mostly from the Old Testament) would make quite effective films if treated on a *real background*, and with very simple costumes, almost like oriental costumes worn to-day. (I personally have a great belief in Hagar's adventure as a film, if it was shot in a real desert.)

The annoying part is that it will be difficult to specialise script-writers, as you need variety and freshness; that means to say that you have to rely on ready-made transcriptions or on adaptations of certain themes by people who can express them.

You will certainly agree that in most cases a sort of "genius" is needed to build real drama round a moral concept, and we all know that without some kind of *drama* there will be no *film*.

I congratulate you on the choice of *Where Love is, God is*. I really enjoyed working on the treatment and I think it should prove the perfect type of religious subject. The Russian atmosphere will give the film an "extra something" and the action is so direct and good that it should present a minimum of difficulties in its film-making.

*What Men Live By* doesn't seem so easy to me. In the early part of the novel the character of Michail has a kind of sustained mystery round it; its main point is the disclosure towards the end that Michail is an Angel.

In the film, Michail's nakedness at the meeting by the Shrine, for instance, would have to be covered by some sort of white robes (which are too much like night-shirts). Again, his three smiles, even being emphasised by glowing light, would only lead later to cut-backs. These cut-backs are always difficult to avoid, because if the events were in the right chronological order most of the suspense would be lost.

Besides these pure constructional points, the fact that there is already one Russian story in your list should be a good argument against it. (I don't mention the point that Simon, like Martin of *Where Love is, God is*, is a shoemaker, because it could be easily altered: he might become a weaver or a miller.)

And even if the two main arguments above were not sufficient, there is a third one to be considered: it is the great difficulty, in the treatment of *What Men Live By*, caused by the mixture of natural and supernatural. Especially in a two-reeler, it is almost impossible to establish the two. This would lead, in our story, to a long monologue by Michail in which he tells Simon and his wife not only what he said to the Lord and what the Lord told him, but also the report to the Lord of his previous conversation with the mother, which then becomes a sort of third-hand affair.

I must confess too, that the lines towards the end of the novel:

> "The roof opened, and a column of fire rose from earth to heavens. Simon and his wife and children fell to the ground. Wings appeared upon the angel's shoulders and he rose into the heavens,"

definitely suggests to me a kind of Chaplinesque treatment for the end of the film. And you wouldn't allow such a jump from seriousness into burlesque, would you?

I think that some of Andersen's Tales, for instance, could, with a very slight twist in their morals, become quite suitable. I am thinking of the one called *The Mother's Tale* more than any other—the actual adventure could easily be transformed and fitted with a worthy conclusion.

As you know it is no use asking successful literary people to do any original scripting for such a scheme. They would be too expensive for one thing, and not sufficiently interested in short films. Our past experiences have well proved this.

Looking over existing books, too, one realises that very few modern writers have anything that would be of any use. Most of the exceptions, like André Gide, only wrote long novels (with costly copyrights, *e.g. La Port étroite* and *La Symphonie Pastorale*).

Maybe Selma Lagerloff, the Swedish lady-writer, has a few possible stories. I am certain that Zangwill has at least one very good one.

The Ufa, in its golden days, did a film about Luther. It was nothing much, lacking air and lacking guts. "History of the Reformation in England" could certainly be not only one of the best religious subjects but also one of the subjects that could be treated exceedingly well by your realist school.

There are plenty of interesting places, portraits and documents relating to the Reformation in England. Besides, these could be easily enlivened, by the showing of the churches and their congregations as they are to-day. The relations of the English leaders with the leaders of other countries would also make an interesting sequence. The start could be illustrated by life in Roman Catholic convents, which can be easily shot in France or Belgium.

**Stills from "Golgotha," a religious film directed by Duvivier.**

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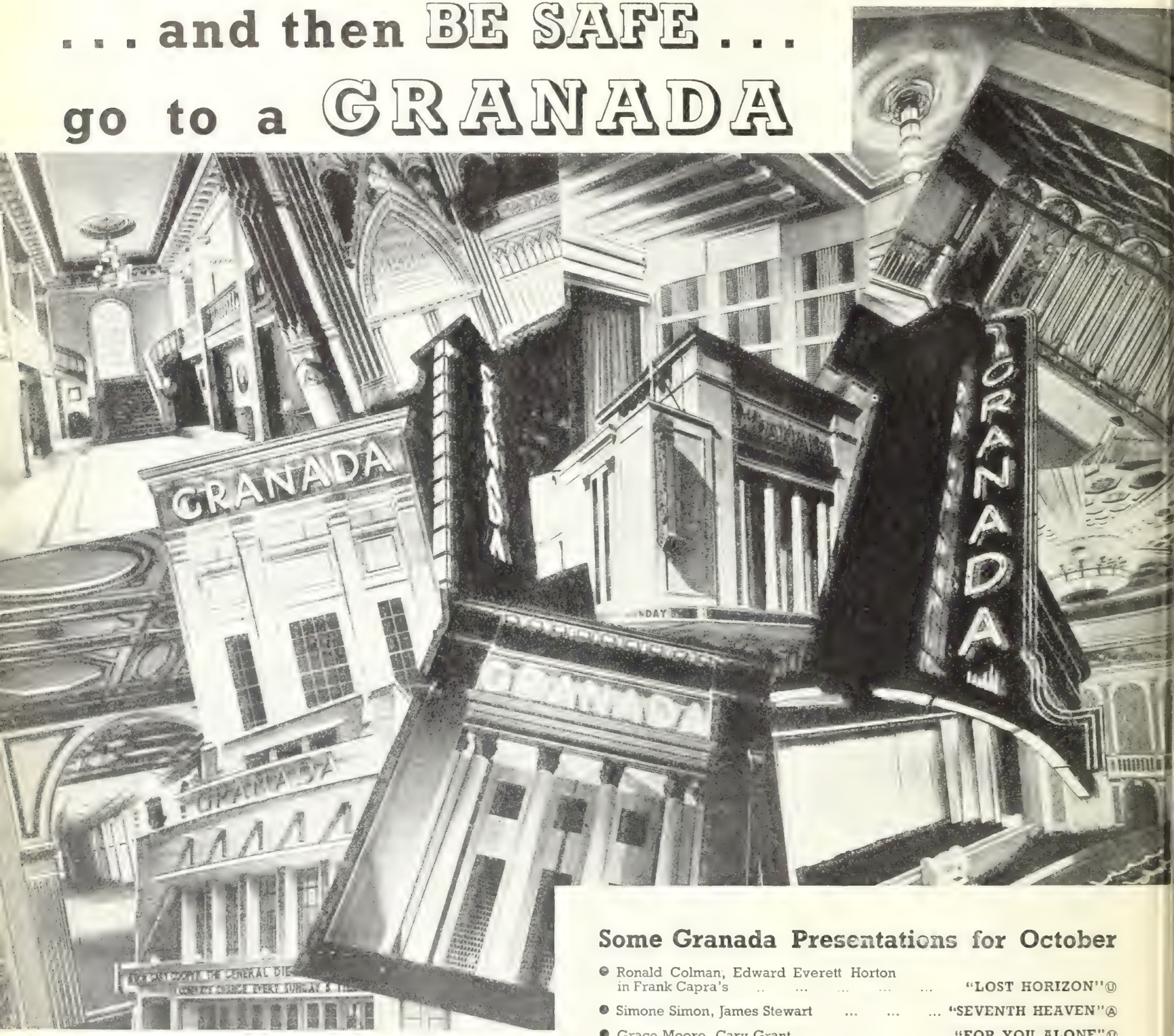


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- Janet Gaynor, Loretta Young, Simone Simon, Constance Bennett, Tyrone Power ... **"LADIES IN LOVE"** Ⓐ
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. . . . WITH A SMILE

# HALF-AN-HOUR with PUDOVKIN

## by Basil Wright

WAFTED on an aroma of fried onions from the all-too-nearby canteen, and pursued by a crowd of anxious men and women seeking instructions and information, V. I. Pudovkin hurtles into a private office at the Mosfilm Studios (Moscow). His panting followers subside as he starts to talk, quickly and with enthusiasm, about films in general and his own in particular.

He is not tall, has bright eyes sunk deep in his head, and speaks very good English, though he has only spent a very short time in England. As he talks—and he is a good talker—the impression of vitality increases. I felt he had been wound up by Providence and was determined to tick on accurately and strike all the hours till the end of time; and it is certainly true that he has the most permanence of all the Russian directors. His solid appreciation of film possibilities has carried him right through from the early and glorious days of *Mother* and *The End of St. Petersburg* through the sound-revolution to a masterwork like *Deserter*. His mind is more than experimental; its abilities are settled and well under control.

Meantime he is talking. "Two years ago I started a new film called *The Happiest*. It was to be about the future of long distance flying in the sub-stratosphere. I wanted to foresee not merely the mechanical factors but also the new race of men that aviation is to breed. The film was shot to a scenario that edged far into a problematical future; and we finished cutting at the end of July this year."

At this point he became exceedingly excited, and almost emotional.

"Then," with a thump on an ash-strewn table, "then the Soviet flights across the North Pole to America suddenly happened. They exceeded the prophecies of my film. They turned my time-factors from future to present. I am now back in production"—(hopeful movement among the waiting crowd)—"re-shooting many of the sequences."

There was an electric pause, while he looked searchingly at me, as at an aborigine from a far country.

"I suppose you in England are really lucky," he said, more slowly. "Because the future doesn't come true while you are working—but our way is much more exciting"—he began to rev up again—"and we feel more genuine life in the work we are doing. The changes are all for the better and I shall finish in November, and do you know the most interesting thing about the cinema" (he has a habit of changing the subject in the middle of a sentence) "it is the relation between the director and the actor."

A feverish restlessness was now evident in the background, and he threw a reassuring signal over his shoulder.

"But I must go now," he continued, settling back in his chair, "and the whole point about the actor is to use the emotional values at the right moment; so it is a question of research and rehearsal. But you cannot obtain results by endless rehearsal in the studio. I am not one who depends so much on the technical resources. I will arrange sets, lights and cameras with endless care; I will calculate the movements and go over them for hours with the actors, BUT" (very excited and talking fast) "the object when you take your shot is to achieve the maximum from your actor, and you cannot do it if you or he are thinking about the machinery. You must block yourself off from the mechanical apparatus around you. That is a great moment—when only the director and the actor exist—the two of them combining to present the maximum of truth, the maximum of drama, the maximum of emotion and reality."

HE quietened down a bit and began to gather up his papers.

"So you see the director must take the actor away and get to know him and discuss every sentence with him, and most of the rehearsals will not be in the restless atmosphere of the studio," he got up, and the rabble surged round him. "The rehearsals will be intimate; everything will be calculated, everything foreseen, against the only moment which counts, which is when the camera starts turning. . . ."

By this time he was at the door, and I put in a hasty word—"With the future coming true all round you, Comrade Pudovkin, what subject shall you choose for your next film?"

"*Anna Karenina*," he said over his shoulder, with a delicate smile, and vanished into the onion-laden corridors.

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# CAGNEY —KING of the CORNER BOYS

"Taxi"

THE recent Bernstein Ballot places James Cagney number seventeen on the list of "liked male stars," and top of the "disliked male stars." This apparent contradiction is easily explained: he owes his comparatively high position among the "liked male stars" to a vote seventy per cent masculine; but his capturing of the unpopularity championship for the second time is due to an overwhelming adverse feminine vote, a vote which also places Robert Taylor as "screen favourite number one," so it needn't be taken too seriously.

This sociological cyclone wields his greatest influence over the young men and boys of the working-class districts—the corner-boy, factory-hand, errand-boy and messenger type. Among them, his gait, dress, staccato sentences, his contempt for women, his punches and slaps, evoke some deep response which finds an outlet in conscious or unconscious imitation. Cagney is essentially the player of these types, but in American settings which add an unusual significance. It is as the personification of the tenement, back-street born, American workman, that Cagney has achieved an unusual importance and world fame.

It is largely due to his portrayals that this phenomenon, the American working man, is known here. All the features of the American urban type are to be seen in Cagney: the independence of thought, the contempt for high-hats, the ready suspicion of the next man allied to an instinctive generosity, a tough exterior allied to sentimentality, the voicing of an outwardly false sense of values allied to a fundamental rightness of angle; all the forcefulness, energy and fatalism which seems so much a part of the American workman. Which may help to explain the startling pictures we have seen during the last year of thousand-dollar-a-week stars in the picket line, with Cagney prominent. Of Cagney, with typical vigour, addressing a meeting of studio workers; or the printed rumours of Cagney's donations to funds in aid of the Spanish Government, and his allegiance to American communism. These may be rumours, exaggerations, bits of straw blown in the winds that sweep America—but they are just as likely to be true, because there is no mistaking the social implications of the Cagney role. The upheaval in America, which has brought trades unionism of a militant type to heavy industry in the States, shoved dynamic showman John Lewis to the front of world labour news and brought a vast sweeping change in the whole tone and appearance of American-born labour, cannot fail to evoke a response in the Brooklyn-born dynamo of the screen.

Hollywood is now making great films of the slums and the social problems arising from slum conditions. *Dead End* and *Winterset* are examples of this—but Cagney did it with less licence and less material. It was implicit in nearly every role he played.

Implicit throughout, whether in the tough-boy, gangster, role for which he was marked out, following the success of *Public Enemy*, or the more directly social-conscious *Taxi* and *Mayor of Hell;* or in the later, *Frisco Kid.*

"His body," Foster Clark has written, "is a transparent instrument for the demonstration of every facet of the lives of millions of men into whose class he was born. . . . He is not only a rough-neck from a down-town filling-station, nor a worn-out racing-driver, nor a cocky truckman, nor a damn-good prize-fighter, nor a petty-gangster, nor a travelling salesman, nor a picture-snatcher, but all of these varied characters, each perfectly realised in itself, with the inimitable addition of his own brand (since he was born with it) of recklessness, bitterness, anguished comedy and sober hysterical gaiety. Cagney is the perfect portrait of the American urban man and boy, whose life is so insecure and dangerous that the only buckler they can forge for themselves up to the present has been in the anarchic, ruthless, funny and tender violence which is apparent (as their reflection) in his every gesture; his walk, his nervous fists, his abrupt silences and his steady mounting rage."

BASICALLY, Cagney is one of the most significant of modern film actors. He is equalled and in many ways surpassed by Muni, with this difference—Muni's gangsters and underworld kings are foreign-born products of the slums, lit by Muni's characteristic intelligence and genius; whereas Cagney's are American, clear-cut American, and mirror the reactions and responses, advances and set-backs of the American worker. He acts with face and voice, but he acts even more with feet and hands and gait—nervous, quick, over-loud, to cover lack of confidence, feet that pitter-patter their rage, or happy, loud, joyous triumphs, hands that clap with sudden exaltation or itch to punch the face in front.

Cagney has made his stand for better and more suitable stories; he is the suited vehicle to translate for the screen, the ferment and the changes sweeping over the American workmen of to-day. And it is to be hoped that he will get the stories his integrity and sincerity of character and performance demand.

**Richard Carr**

*Taxi*—Warner Bros.

**"Hands that itch to punch . . ."**

# PEOPLE OF THE STUDIOS

## Great Britain

### Denham

The unexpected success of *Victoria the Great* in New York has resulted in Herbert Wilcox receiving a production contract with Radio and an appointment as chief of Radio's British production activities. Deal is for four or five subjects annually, costing up to £150,000 each. "I now feel more national-minded than ever," said Wilcox. "The true international value of our films lies in their being essentially British in subject and setting. If I had my way I would never make another picture in black and white."

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*A Yank at Oxford*, first subject of M.G.M.-British, started production on September 1st with Robert Taylor, Lionel Barrymore, and Maureen O'Sullivan. Jack Conway, responsible for *Viva Villa*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, and *Libelled Lady*, directs; Michael Balcon produces. Camera work is by Hal Rosson, last at Denham for *The Ghost Goes West*. Supervising editress is Margaret Booth, who for some years held a similar position with Irving Thalberg. Second M.G.M.-British picture will be *Shadow of the Wing*, drama of the R.A.F., with Clark Gable and James Stewart. The Air Ministry is giving full facilities.

Metro is negotiating to lease the Palace Theatre in Cambridge Circus for ten years. Understood that C. B. Cochran, one of the theatre's directors, instigated the deal some weeks ago. Idea is to have another West End house for super-pictures on a long run basis, instead of continuous as at the Empire. The theatre would also be used to test out shows for possible filming.

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Shooting starts October 1st on Gracie Fields' first for Twentieth Century-Fox, *He Was Her Man*. Victor McLaglen has the other top spot in this picture, story of which has a goldrush background. Script is by Sam Hellman, direction by Monty Banks. Cost is expected to top £200,000.

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Elizabeth Allan has quit the cast of *The Rat*, current Chatterton-Walbrook picture, following a dispute over star billing. Rene Ray gets the part. . . . Props and costumes from Korda's unfinished *I, Claudius* have been loaned to Sydney Carroll for his open air production of *Julius Caesar* at Regent's Park. London Films still lists the picture for autumn production. . . . Dr. A. J. Cronin's novel *The Citadel*, which ran into three editions the first week of publication, has been bought for filming by Victor Saville. . . . Annabella's proposed film, *Let's Go to Paris*, has been temporarily shelved, and her *Follow the Sun* has been re-christened *Dinner at the Ritz*. . . .

* * * *

Leslie Howard has been signed for the lead in Korda's *Lawrence of Arabia*, which has been shelved since spring. William K. Howard, who directs, will take a unit to Egypt for exteriors. On completion of the picture he remains in England to direct Laughton in *White Gold* for Mayflower Films.

### Highbury

*The Romance of Dancing*, made at the Highbury studios, is the first commercial exploitation of the Multiscene system. By use of Multiscene the illusion of spectacular sets and a limitless number of dancers can be given with only a few feet of floor space and a handful of players. Origin of the process was the necessity to provide a spectacular title background for the Winad's trailer to *The Great Ziegfeld*. Inventor was Mr. Herbert Parsons.

*The Romance of Dancing* is primarily a spectacular musical dancing production, to be released as a series of six two-reelers by M.G.M. In no case have more than ten artists been used, and none of the thirty scenes exceeds 20 feet in width or height. Actual floor space utilised was 20 by 30 feet.

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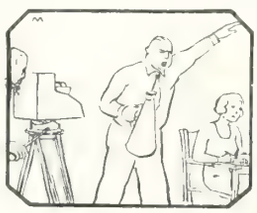
Current production here is *Sam Small Leaves Town*, with Stanley Holloway and June Clyde. Alf Goulding, who made several Harold Lloyd silent films, and *The Gang Show* with Ralph Reader, is directing.

### Pinewood

From September 30th to October 5th televiewers will see films in the making . . . probably an unwise step as far as film-makers are concerned. A mobile television unit will be stationed at the studios and transmission from the stages will be given on three nights. Programme will include Sonnie Hale directing *Sailing Along* with Jessie Matthews, Jack Whiting, Roland Young, and Barry McKay; René Clair directing the new Buchanan picture with Maurice Chevalier; and a glimpse at a British Paramount film in production. In the afternoon the camera will visit the power house, plasterer's shop, boardroom (rebuilt from the saloon of the *Mauretania*), garden estate, cutting rooms, workshops, and the model room, where it is hoped to stage a train smash. Tour will include the dressing rooms, with Nova Pilbeam, Will Hay, Lili Palmer and Desmond Tester acting as guides.



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First of Hitchcock's next two directorial jobs for G. B. will be another Nova Pilbeam picture, adapted from a French short story by Marcel Achard. Hitch, John Harrison, his assistant, and Mrs. Hitchcock (Alma Reville), are working on the script, and production starts in November. Cast so far unsettled.

Hitchcock has made no decision regarding plans after the expiry of his present contract, although M.G.M. and other U.S. companies have been hankering after him. He figures ultimately to become a producer . . . says the director's importance in pictures is waning and that the writing and production ends are gradually taking on increased importance.

## America

### Grand National

A nineteen-year ambition on the part of Victor Schertzinger to shoot a film in continuity is being fulfilled with *Something to Sing About*. Film is being shot in sequence from beginning to end—an unusual procedure in the film world. James Cagney, star of the picture, is also fulfilling an old ambition . . . during the ten years since he left the song-and-dance business for tough-guy parts in Hollywood, he has kept up his dance practice daily, in the hope that some day he might make a musical. Fred Astaire has been showing him a step or two.

Leslie Howard is playing a part in the comeback career of Anna Sten. Howard and Dr. Frenke, Miss Sten's husband, have formed Frenke Productions, backed in part by Californian oil money, and will make three films starring Miss Sten for Grand National release, and three for release through other companies. Howard will probably star in one.

### Paramount

*Beau Geste*, which Paramount has had on the cards for more than a year, gets a positive date on the studio's production schedule for November. It will be one of Lucien Hubbards' four pictures for the year to be made in Technicolor. Script is by W. P. Lipscomb.

Harold Lloyd, fighting hard to keep his place among front-rank comedians, is securing Jean Arthur for his next picture, *Professor Beware*. Time was when any star of Lloyd's stature was strong enough to carry a picture to box-office success with supporting rôles assigned to little- or lesser-known players. The need for double-star billing comes with the arrival of more sophisticated comedy.

Marlene Dietrich's *Angel* will soon be over here . . . title doesn't suggest a sophisticated melodrama and romance, but the association of producer-director Ernst Lubitsch with Dietrich, Herbert Marshall, and Melvyn Douglas emphatically does. Samson Raphaelson, contributing writer to *The Last of Mrs. Cheyney*, *The Gay Deception*, *Accent on Youth*, *The Merry Widow*, and *Trouble in Paradise*, wrote the script from the continental stage play. Supporting cast includes Edward Everett Horton, with Lubitsch in *Design for Living* and *Merry Widow*, and Ernest Cossart, with the director and Miss Dietrich in *Desire*. Frederick Hollander, who composed the theme song, wrote solo numbers for *Desire* and *Awake and Dream*. Cameraman Charles Lang was photographer for *Desire*.

Rebecca West has been signed to write an original story for Claudette Colbert. . . . Cecil B. De Mille shooting *The Buccaneer* with Fredric March, Franciska Gaal and Walter Brennan. . . . Edward Arnold making his singing debut in B. P. Schulberg's *Blossoms on Broadway*. . . . Frances Dee and Bob Burns added to the cast of Frank Lloyd's *Wells Fargo*, featuring Joel McCrea. . . . Mae West making *Everyday's a Holiday*, with Edmund Lowe. Edward Sutherland directing.

## Warner Bros.

Warners launched two big films last month. First to get away was *Gold is Where You Find It*, with Michael Curtiz directing. Week later *The Adventures of Robin Hood* was begun under William Keighley.

Looks as though Warners might miss the boat by filming only an incident in the career of David Garrick, famous Shakespearean actor and idol of eighteenth-century Drury Lane. Incident takes place round about 1750, and the comedy aspect is exploited. Based on a screenplay by Ernest Vadja, contributor to *Personal Property* and *A Woman Rebels*, the film is directed by James Whale (most recent assignments: *Showboat* and *The Road Back*). Brian Aherne and Olivia de Havilland are in the top spots.

Knights of the Klu Klux Klan have filed a suit for £2,700 against Warner Bros. for alleged use of their patented insignia in *The Black Legion*. The suit complains that two of the principal characters wore the Klan's white cross, superimposed on a background of red with a black square. The Klu Kluxers also charge that the film's dialogue contained the reference "Are we in for another reign of terror by a new Klu Klux Klan?"

A series of educational shorts is being made for Yale University to assist students of the medical college and other groups.

Executives are negotiating with Miriam Hopkins to do *Jezebel*, Bible story, on her one picture commitment. The film was originally scheduled for Bette Davis, but latter goes into *Hollywood Hotel* instead.

Report in last month's *W.F.N.* of Paul Muni's proposed two-years' retirement is followed by rumours of his decision to play Attila the Hun, fifth-century Barbarian chieftain whose vast domain extended from China to the Atlantic. Rumours, also, that Laemmle wants him for *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

## M.G.M.

So successful has been Hollywood's campaign against the gangster that M.G.M. is able to announce *The Last Gangster*. Big money offered by Metro for the loan of Roy Del Ruth to direct this Edward G. Robinson-Luise Rainer starrer was rejected by Twentieth Century-Fox. Del Ruth recently completed *Broadway Melody* for M.G.M., and now returns to the Fox fold for the next Sonja Henie picture, *Bread, Butter, and Rhythm*.

David Miller, shorts director, is in Europe making one-reelers of big continental personalities. He hopes to persuade the three big dictators to allow a camera to follow them through the day's work. It is expected that the Duke and Duchess of Windsor will also be approached.

Doubts have lately arisen over both the desirability and availability of Charles Laughton for the role of Louis XVI in Norma Shearer's *Marie Antoinette*, and it is possible that Robert Taylor will play the French king. Peter Lorre and Charles Boyer have also been considered. Laughton had an agreement with Irving Thalberg for another picture to follow *Mutiny on the Bounty*, but recently declared he would consider the *Antoinette* part only if Miss Shearer came to England for the film. The American system of taxation is reputedly the trouble.

*The Firefly*, Rudolf Friml musical with Jeannette MacDonald and Allan Jones, is in the new Metrocolour effect . . . film is toned through a chemical formula employing platinum and other salts, giving the picture a bronzed effect. John M. Nickolaus discovered the process.

Garbo's *Conquest* (formerly *Madame Walewska*) put back into production for several days of retakes and added scenes . . . Myrna Loy handed the lead in *Test Pilot*. Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy also set, with Victor Fleming directing. . . . James M. Cain, author of *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, literary sensation of three years back, discovered on the Metro staff. . . . Carl Laemmle, jun., patting himself on the back for the resale of *The Amazing Doctor Clitterhouse* to Warners at $30,000 profit.

## United Artists

Samuel Goldwyn has built a replica of a two-hundred yards section of the Great Wall in China for *The Adventures of Marco Polo*, Gary Cooper's current picture. Budget for settings alone amounts to £100,000, or just one-third of total production costs. Great Wall section cost £12,000. One thousand extras were used for location shooting at Malibu Lake, causing a shortage of extras elsewhere and a hold-up on several Western pictures.

A committee from the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was invited to witness battle-scene rushes involving 250 horses. The visit was to forestall possible rumours of cruelty during the fighting episodes.

Binnie Barnes and Sigrid Gurie (Goldwyn's "hush-hush" Norwegian discovery) have feminine leads in the film.

Personalities from all branches of the entertainment world contribute to *The Goldwyn Follies*. Helen Jepson and Charles Kullman, Metropolitan stars, represent grand opera; ballet has Norwegian dancer Vera Zorina, and George Balanchine; Bobby Clark comes from the musical-comedy stage, and radio and night clubs have a delegation headed by Virginia Verrill and ventriloquist Edgar Bergen. Music is by the late George Gershwin and his brother Ira. Screen representatives are Adolphe Menjou and the Ritz Brothers.

After six days shooting on *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, David Selznick called a halt . . . decided the film lacked colour and put it back into production before the Technicolour cameras with a new director, Norman Taurog. Change will double the cost of the film. Principal rôles are filled by Tommy Kelly, Walter Brennan, Jackie Moran, Beulah Bondi, Victor Jory, and Cora Sue Collins. Jimmy Wong Howe is at the camera.

Walter Wanger has announced a £400,000 production dealing with the history of California, in which his six contract stars, Madeleine Carroll, Charles Boyer, Sylvia Sidney, Joan Bennett, and Henry Fonda are all to take part. Planned to follow in the epic tradition of *The Covered Wagon*, it will trace the development of the state from the earliest days. Screenplay is by Grover Jones, who scripted *Lives of a Bengal Lancer*.

## France

Jean-Michel Renaitour, president of the Cinema Parliamentary Group, recently drafted a bill hitting here-today-and-gone-tomorrow producers and their tight-fisted methods. French movie industry is joining in this united movement to place the business on a more profitable and ethical basis.

Renatoir's bill provides:

1. Clean-up of the French market by obliging all producers to deposit in banks half of the sum of proposed production costs.
2. Guaranteed control of state taxes by confining percentage charges to box-office receipts.
3. Reform of censorship so that high production costs may not be sunk in a production later banned by the censors.
4. Exportation visas to be demanded in order to protect the French films abroad.
5. Reform of agencies for actors and extras, who now, it is claimed, often hand out from 40 to 50 per cent of their salaries in commission.

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As soon as Warner Bros.' *Tovarich* comes off the floor in Hollywood, Charles Boyer is due back in his native country to make *Le Venin* for André Daven. Stage play by Henry Bernstein is being adapted for the screen by Marcel Achard, and Marc Allegret is set as director. Pat Paterson (Boyer's wife) plays feminine lead.

Boyer is booked to make English and French versions of *Mylord l'Arsouille* in Paris next year.

## Germany

France and Germany at war again . . . this time over a German film. Few weeks ago a resolution was passed at the International Film Congress that no country should make films harmful to the prestige of another country. In the middle of the convention a new film, *Mon Fils, Monsieur le Ministre*, opened in Berlin which correspondents of French dailies reported strongly anti-French. To complicate the situation, French actress Mme Françoise Rosay plays the lead, and picture is based on Henri Birabeau's "Fiston," a satire on the French Government.

French claim the film attacks democracy in general, and France in particular. First part the Germans admit, but state that there is nothing which might be interpreted as an attack on France. Film is simply a farce on the democratic form of government before 1933.

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"In this country we do not read books. We swim, we wrestle, we fence, we lift weights, but we do not allow our muscles to be softened by intellectualism."

The above passage, uttered by a police chief, was responsible for the banning of the Tobis picture, *The Land We Love*. The non-Aryan director of the film, it is understood, has since fled to America and accepted another engagement.

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Jaques Feyder, director of *La Kermesse Héroïque* and *Knight Without Armour*, has started production of *People on Wheels*, under the auspices of K. J. Fritzsche Productions of the Tobis-Magna. Françoise Rosay, Camilla Horn and Irene von Meyendorff star in the film, story of which centres round circus life.

# SIX FILMS

## by John Grierson

*Fredric March "A Star is Born"*

I AM going to follow Mr. Swaffer in my estimate of recent films. Swaffer talks of passing from the wooden-headed atmosphere of *Broadway Melody* to the electric excitement of the Farr-Louis fight; and this was the sequence in which I saw the films myself. I too am for the Farrs against the Taylors any day. There is about Farr a sense of getting to work about something which the other, so obviously nice young man, lacks. The electric thing about the Farr-Louis fight is, of course, that one is seeing it.

Like other maniacs I stayed up for the broadcast. The commentary by Bob Bowman was, in its way, a good job of work. It conveyed the atmosphere; it told a story which, in its own terms, was exciting; and it had, as radio always has, the infinite advantage of immediacy. Yet it was a thoroughly bad documentary. There was too much atmosphere and too little observation; it lacked expertise. I do not pretend to know much about fights, but here was a fight story in which the principal and almost only emphasis was the surprise at seeing Farr put up a stand at all. The estimate of the business in hand was never for any space objective or concrete. And that, of course, is the worst of radio and immediacy. Its spontaneities may be fresh but they tend to be superficial; and what a relief to the intelligent mind to come back to movie and find the real material for a judgment. Even a week after.

The film was giving that extra something which the other had not got. Call it authenticity. I suppose expert opinion of the fight must be that Farr did well but not nearly well enough and that the show was nowhere near championship class. My own layman's reaction is that if any film producer focused as naïvely on the head and traded lefts with as little variety for fifteen rounds, he would be suspected of a lack of genius. The great satisfaction of the event was that a British subject should be fighting in this class at all; and a fine comment it is on our self-respect that we should find it bewildering. The only word to say is that one brave young Welshman has at last taken it for granted that Americans can be—at times—ninety per cent hooey; and I hope the lesson is not lost on our native film producers. They too have a tendency to accept demurely their American classification as "horizontal hams."

AS for *Broadway Melody*, I cannot pretend to have seen it all. It took an hour by the clock for the various heroes and heroines to be rounded up from the race tracks, horse boxes, Fifth Avenue flats and theatrical boarding houses. There was no doubt they were up to something once the process of getting together had been got over. My own guess—probably as good as any—was that it would finish in a musical comedy show, with the racehorse winning just enough to see the production expenses through. But I felt that an hour by the clock was rank inefficiency and that some sort of active protest was called for. I left. Regarding Eleanor Powell, I note a recent description of Gordon Craig's: "One of these American ladies who does something astonishingly well, putting into her work an energy and a thoroughness which, if energy and thoroughness could do great things, would do so in this case. . . . Unless great talent—or of course genius—accompanies energy and thoroughness nothing is come of nothing." It is not about Miss Powell but it will serve. She has as many footnotes as a sociological treatise out of Chicago University—and I rate her exactly there.

BETTER, I found, was *Wake Up and Live*, and I am surprised more has not been made of it. This too is a musical, and a lively one, with the characters all on and no nonsense. None of your lumbering locomotives on Wrotham Hill taking Ziggs Giant Circus from Charing to Farningham, which is Hollywood's more recent conception of a musical special. This thing moves along and, based as it is on a radio rivalry between two actual people—Walter Winchell, New York's Mr. Hickey, only less urbane, and Ben Bernie, the band leader—it carries an interesting flash of actuality. The skit on America's passion for disciplined attendants will gladden the heart of everyone who has enjoyed the uniformed monkey tricks of a Publix or Roxy theatre—or listened to our own P.C.T. telephone slogan, "Blank theatre, at your service." It is nice to see these unctions being ridden down.

THE response of my immediate neighbours to *A Star is Born* may be worth recording. Len Lye describes its colour as "technically a terrific job," and on these matters Lye is, of course, an authority. He has thought more about colour possibilities, and certainly realised more of them, than anyone in the country.

**Farr-Louis Fight**

A Universal Newsreel.

**Broadway Melody of 1938**

A M.G.M. film, directed by Roy Del Ruth, with Robert Taylor and Eleanor Powell.

**Wake Up and Live**

A 20th Century-Fox film, directed by Sidney Lanfield, with Walter Winchell and Ben Bernie.

**A Star is Born**

A United Artists film, directed by William A. Wellman, with Janet Gaynor, Fredric March, Adolphe Menjou and Lionel Stander.

From other than a laboratory point of view—and all honour to the Technicolor people for their progress—I find the colour of *A Star is Born* no great shakes in excitement. Lye's own recent work in *Trade Tattoo* is a generation ahead when it comes to mobilising colour to the point of sensation. In the Hollywood article, it is still, for the most part, a mere decorative addition to the story.

Yet it is worth a critic's while to examine this film very closely, and distinguish those points where colour steps in to help up the description. The simple fact emerges, for example, that black has curious dramatic powers in a colour film. There are moments in *A Star is Born* which stay in the head—the shadow of a train falling across a woman's face; the eyes of a girl when she is kissed in the dark; the eyes of a man watching in the dark. These moments are all of a kind, and very simple, but they seem to indicate that in colour we may achieve a new and useful sense of intimacy. On the other hand, overlighting has been a deplorable convention in film studios, and few directors have tried to find what black and white might do in the same direction. The ironic situation has, perhaps, arisen, that it has taken colour to discover for us the powers of black and white. After all, the most intimate dramatic appearance of eyes that ever occurred in a film was in "*M*."

In the abstractions of its musical comedy values, the almost classical conventions of its hokum, Hollywood is, as ever, a thousand times surer of its ground; and these fine little aids to intimate and dramatic statement which colour is bringing, are, I fear, incidental only. But, as it happens, *A Star is Born* is excellent good hokum. The detail of the acting "business" is particularly good, and the film is finely directed. The less said about its story of rising and waning star values, and all the vanities and ambitions which are the life stream of Hollywood, the better.

# REVIEWED

## by Basil Wright

**The Edge of the World**

A British Independent film, directed by Michael Powell, with Niall Macginnis, Belle Chrystal and John Laurie.

**The High Command**

An A.B.F.D. film, directed by Thorold Dickinson, with Steve Geray, Lionel Atwill, Lucie Mannheim and Tom Gill.

MICHAEL Powell turned up some years ago as the first director of English quickies to show signs of knowing how to make good films. But after his early efforts (like *Rynox*) he disappeared somewhat from the critical ken. Now we may assume that in the interval he was maturing his technique and knowledge in order to burst upon us with *The Edge of the World*, which is as near as anything a masterpiece.

When film companies go on location with a bunch of actors and a story, documentalists (and others) usually shudder in advance at the hotchpotch of bogus sunsets and studio afterthoughts which will inevitably make the bulk of the film. Powell is no documentalist, as witness some aspects of the story he has chosen, but he is nevertheless that rarity among film directors—a human being who can express himself in simple terms of humanity.

His location was the island of Foula, and the controlling factor in his story is a restatement of what happened to St. Kilda—the decision by the inhabitants to evacuate the island because an impoverished soil would no longer sustain their cattle and their crops and because the tyrannous trawlers were desolating their immemorial fishing grounds. At this the eyes of certain documentalists gleam, and the script is as good as written.

Not so Powell, who is employed by a commercial firm. He takes a story with frankly melodramatic elements—the Calvinist old man who won't face modern facts; the family feud which separates girl and boy, though not before the procreation of an illegitimate babe, which subsequently gets involved in diphtheria and a ride to the rescue through a raging ocean; a cliff climbing contest which ends in tragic disaster; and so on. Hack stuff, you may say. But note that these melodramatic little incidents do happen; they happen, however, over a period of years, and not all at once, and it is crowding them all together into one tight little story which gives an air of unreality. In this sense the story of *The Edge of the World* is undoubtedly forced. But Powell has, one feels, seen the other point and has treated each incident for its isolated worth as something which might happen—probably has happened—in a remote island community. The result is that even if the basic conflict between melodramatics and tragedy has not been properly resolved, at least a genuine portrait has been achieved, a movingly real atmosphere established, and, further, something extra has been added to the æsthetic of cinema.

Poor Sassenach that I am, and subject to correction from the superior sense of my colleague across the page—yet I feel the impact of a genuine portrayal in the presentation of this story. It is not merely that the little details which make up the total effect of a good landscape have been brilliantly collated and presented; it is rather that the feelings and actions of real people living under certain conditions have been most truthfully and movingly pieced together. What Powell has done with his actors—his professional actors—will forever be an astonishment to me. The restraint of his direction—and, let it be said, the brilliance of Palmer, his cameraman—has enabled them to combine successfully with the ordinary islanders who also play a large part in the film. This is not to say that the acting is perfect. John Laurie and Belle Chrystal lapse sometimes into a reminder of a world we would like to forget; the wonder is they lapse so seldom; more wonder still that Niall Macginnis should lapse not at all. But in general the actors do become a part of the island, and for this they deserve much credit.

The film, however, is exciting chiefly because its direction, its photography and its cutting create sequence after sequence with guts as well as loveliness. Atmosphere there is in plenty—in fact the very weather controls the mood of each scene—but more than this, such sequences as the church service reproduce something fundamental and sincere which so many of us have been trained so painfully to forget. The film is indeed full of things we have forgotten—as that gnats dance on even if Romeo is separated from Juliet, that seagulls will continue to fly long after the warm houses have fallen into decay, or that there is something quite matter-of-fact about a winter gale.

One could blether for ever about *The Edge of the World*, and still not explain its wholly personal fascination. Maybe sophisticated people will find it embarrassing; so much the worse for them. For myself I can only end with a slam; why use the most artificial of sound effects on such a non-artificial film? The concealed orchestra frequently comes near to bringing a good sequence down to the level of *Sanders of the River* or *King Solomon's Mines*—and neither the visuals nor the natural sounds give reason to suppose it was necessary.

FROM a more sophisticated world comes Thorold Dickinson, whose work for Basil Dean's Studios at Ealing, and for the Film Society movement in this country, has been so little appreciated that the qualities of his

*"The Edge of the World"*

first directorial effort have come as a surprise to many (including the cinema which gave it its première and couldn't believe till the last minute that the public wanted it for a second week).

*The High Command* is handicapped from the start by a murder-mystery so drearily complicated that it is not worth the telling. It has obviously forced Dickinson back into exploiting technique, with the result that the film in this respect reaches a higher standard of excellence than many more ambitious English productions. The sound recording, in particular, is quite brilliant in its sense of perspective and absence of ground noise.

Dickinson, too, knows how to handle his actors, and has had the sense to choose an unorthodox but very effective cast.

After a false start over an ambush scene during the Irish troubles, the film gets into its stride; not so much in terms of its story as in its creation of the atmosphere attaching to a one-horse port on the West Coast of Africa. Dickinson shot his backgrounds on location, and shot them well, but he also did some acute snooping on the mental and physical characteristics of the local whites. The result is that we get a pretty picture of how people look and behave in a really god-awful climate which they were never born to stand. It is this not unkind presentation which gives the film its value and marks Dickinson as a good director. The scene of the court martial, with its mingling of frigid politeness, suspense, and the merciless bullying of native witnesses, is excellent; better still is a brilliant exposition of the arrival of the Governor at "The Club." As "God Save the King" is played a squall of wind blows open the windows and generally creates a minor havoc, but not a soul moves till the anthem ends; a very pretty piece of work.

It's now up to someone to give Dickinson a good story; his talent deserves it.

# *Review of the Month*

## *They Won't Forget*

(Mervyn LeRoy—Warner Brothers.)
Claude Rains, Allyn Joslyn, Edward Norris, Gloria Dickson.

The fact that it is a sociological screen drama should not keep any one away from *They Won't Forget*. Although it is a powerful and moving indictment of mob violence and lynch law, it is no tract. On the contrary, it is a brilliant and gripping melodrama. There is no more overt propaganda in the film than there is in any work of art that sets a personal tragedy firmly against the forces of its time. Ward Greene's sombre novel of sectional bigotry, "Death in the Deep South," has supplied an essentially dramatic and striking theme. Mervyn LeRoy has taken it and fashioned it with great skill and integrity into a memorable motion picture.

It takes its place naturally with *Fury* and *Black Legion* as one of Hollywood's infrequent but exciting excursions into the sinister social expressions of our civilisation. In my opinion it is finer than either of them. *They Won't Forget* is much more than the screen record of a specific mob murder. There is a dispassionate perspective in the script and in Mr. LeRoy's consummate direction that makes this a universal and abiding arraignment of intolerance and crowd fury. The analysis of the motives and forces involved is searching and incontrovertible, but it is never self-conscious. It cuts through to the core of the "hatred, fear, and prejudice" that dominates the narrative and yet does so in terms of smashing dramatic action.

Mr. LeRoy has shown himself a shrewd director in the past, with a flair for screen values, but never has he demonstrated such mature artistry. His handling of the material in *They Won't Forget* is always soundly imaginative. It is a community he has to consider, rather than isolated individuals and he never shirks the task. With a restless camera, subtle suggestion, and adroit editing, he brings the whole Southern town of Flodden to the screen and keeps it clearly in focus as a Northern schoolteacher is convicted of a girl's murder on specious circumstantial evidence, is given a commutation of sentence by an upright governor and is ruthlessly executed by a lynching party.

**"D.A. on his way to the Senate . . ."**

**"Mob violence and lynch law . . ."**

The most unforgettable sequences in the production are achieved by understatement. The lynching itself is a masterly piece of oblique camera narration. As Hale, the schoolteacher, is being taken to the penitentiary, the train is stopped and he is pushed screaming into the mob. The train gathers momentum again and at a way station there is a close-up of a mailbag dangling from a cross bar which is suddenly jerked into space. When the girl is assaulted and killed, you see her standing in a deserted classroom, stiffening with instinctive fear as she hears ominous footsteps in the corridor, and then, with hair-trigger timing, the image lap dissolves into a volley of muskets at a Memorial Day celebration. The cumulative effect of episodes such as these gives *They Won't Forget* an almost intolerable burden of suspense and terror.

—Howard Barnes, *The New York Herald Tribune*

Two indictments of lynching appear almost simultaneously: the film, *They Won't Forget*, and Don Tracy's new novel, "How Sleeps the Beast."* The book has been highly praised, and deservedly so, for it is a skilful, ruthless account of the lynching of a negro, sparing none of the sickening detail. But how much more effective as propaganda is the film, though it has much less licence for horror. Tracy's story and characters seem unimportant adjuncts to the lynching episode; the film, on the other hand, is an enthralling drama in which the lynching grows inevitably out of the circumstances, the atmosphere and the people.

Tracy's negro commits the crime for which he is lynched. The victim in the film does not; at least the evidence is insufficient and points to another. A schoolgirl is murdered. The first suspect is a negro and the police are prepared to grill a confession out of him. Not so the District Attorney, played brilliantly by Claude Rains. He sees bigger game than a negro when circumstances lead him to Hale, a northerner, and the girl's schoolteacher: convict him and District Attorney Andy Griffiths is on his way to the Senate.

Bit by bit the atmosphere is created in which conviction is inevitable, whatever the evidence. From the first half-humorous, half-sad shot of Civil War veterans waiting to march in the memorial parade to the Confederate dead, to the final fatal plea of the accused against prejudice, we see the mounting hostility of South and North upon which the prosecutor really depends for his success. "It's the Civil War over again," shouts a reporter, as the Northern papers accuse "Southern prejudice" and Southern anger mounts against Northern interference.

The opening parade; the slow drawl of the South contrasting with the sharper clip of Northern tones; the moaning fear-stricken negro; the ominous quiet of the fanning crowds round the court-house ("It's a funny crowd, they're so quiet," says the reporter); the tense silence of the court-room, broken by murmurs of anger or applause or by sharp interjections; the grim hate of the mill-worker brothers of the dead girl ("We know how it's going to end"); the hopelessness of the defence's fight against it all; the honest governor who sacrifices his career to reprieve the victim, only to prepare the way for the lynching—all this is part of a brilliantly-built picture of the people and their environment.

The film grips to the end—the reporters question to the D.A.: "You know, Andy, now that it's all over, I wonder if Hale really did it," and the reply: "I wonder." It has *Fury* whacked to a standstill. Mervyn LeRoy has enlisted all the tricks of the trade and a deal of hokum in the service of progressive cinematic propaganda and keeps us on the edge of our seats all the way through.

A dramatically presented slice of life that shows up alarmingly the long way that British films have to travel before even beginning to equal such a truly great picture as this.

—Richard Carr, *World Film News*

*Critical Summary.*

*When Fritz Lang directed "Fury" he proved to Hollywood that highly controversial subjects could be presented without loss at the box-office. M.G.M. made "Fury" in some trepidation. Its success surprised them. Hollywood, of course, has done good work in condemning racketeering, graft and corruption, but mob violence is a very different thing. Feeling is so strong in the Southern States that one would have expected the studios to sit on the fence and say nothing. But "Fury" successfully started the campaign against lynching and now "They Won't Forget" has most ably carried it forward.*

**"Moaning, fear-stricken Negro . . ."**

*Constable, 7s. 6d.

# *Feature Films for October Release*

This is not a complete list of current releases, but a *W.F.N.* selection. While all poor and mediocre films are omitted from the list, inclusion does not necessarily infer outstanding merit. For the guidance of our readers, films starred in *Review of Reviews* are again starred.

**Last of Mrs. Cheyney** (M.G.M.) *
*DIRECTOR:* Richard Boleslawski
*STARRING:* Joan Crawford
William Powell
Robert Montgomery

**Lost Horizon** (Columbia) *
*DIRECTOR:* Frank Capra
*STARRING:* Ronald Colman
Jane Wyatt
John Howard
Edward Everett Horton
Isabel Jewell
H. B. Warner
Margo

**They Gave Him a Gun** (M.G.M.) *
*DIRECTOR:* W. S. Van Dyke
*STARRING:* Spencer Tracy
Franchot Tone
Gladys George

**You Only Live Once** (United Artists) *
*DIRECTOR:* Fritz Lang
*STARRING:* Sylvia Sidney
Henry Fonda
Jean Dixon
William Gargan

**God's Country and the Woman** (First National)
*DIRECTOR:* William Keighley
*STARRING:* George Brent
Beverly Roberts

**Her Husband Lies** (Paramount)
*DIRECTOR:* Edward Ludwig
*STARRING:* Ricardo Cortez
Gail Patrick

**History is Made at Night** (United Artists)
*DIRECTOR:* Frank Borzage
*STARRING:* Charles Boyer
Jean Arthur
Leo Carrillo
Colin Clive

**Penny Pool** (Mancunian)
*DIRECTOR:* George Black, Jr.
*STARRING:* Douglas Wakefield
Tommy Fields
Louanne Shaw

**Quality Street** (Radio)
*DIRECTOR:* George Stevens
*STARRING:* Katharine Hepburn
Franchot Tone
Fay Bainter
Cora Witherspoon

**Seventh Heaven** (20th Century-Fox)
*DIRECTOR:* Henry King
*STARRING:* James Stewart
Simone Simon

**Slave Ship** (20th Century-Fox)
*DIRECTOR:* Tay Garnett
*STARRING:* Warner Baxter
Wallace Beery
Elizabeth Allen
Mickey Rooney
Joseph Schildkraut

And the month's Western:

**Borderland** (Paramount)
*DIRECTOR:* Nate Watt
*STARRING:* William Boyd
James Ellison

### W.F.N. Selection

*They Won't Forget* * * *

*A Star is Born* * *

*The Edge of the World* *

*Souls at Sea* *

### *Other Films Covered in this Issue*

*Farr-Louis Fight Newsreel*

*Broadway Melody of* 1938

*The High Command*

*Wake Up and Live*

*Artists and Models*

*The Emperor's Candlesticks*

*High, Wide and Handsome*

*Action for Slander*

*The Road Back*

*His Affair*

*Call It a Day*

*Cotton Queen*

*A Castle in Flanders*

*Die Tochter der Samurai*

## *Souls at Sea*

(Henry Hathaway—Paramount.)
Gary Cooper, George Raft, Frances Dee, Henry Wilcoxon, Olympe Bradna.

Inevitably, since Mr. Gary Cooper takes the chief part, this account of a shipwreck in the last century and the subsequent trial is much altered from history, though it is unusual that the changes should be confessed. Charged with manslaughter after the wreck of the *William Brown*, Mr. Cooper must still be the perfect hero of a novel by Mr. Hemingway and at the same time Mr. Deeds in person. It must be admitted that he manages virtue extremely well, even when it is of one particular kind and has to be repeated again and again, no doubt as a result of the obsessional repetition-compulsion from which the films suffer. His humanitarianism always seems genuine, and if anyone could manage the martyrdoms and misunderstandings that result from pretending to be a slaver in order to check the slave-trade it would be Mr. Cooper. For the rest the film is full of horrors and adventures, culminating in a truly appalling shipwreck which only the strongest nerves could accept as entertainment.

—*The Times*

Lord, but this film deserves so much more space than I can give it, so much more recommendation than the printed word can ensure! Its climax shows the burning of a boat. I shall now burn mine, by proclaiming it the best picture I have seen in 1937. I know that its tragedy moved me profoundly; that its spectacle stirred admiration uninterrupted by a single sneer; that its quick, shy humour made me laugh more *comfortably* than ever before; that its photography is fine, its acting finer, its direction by Henry Hathaway finest of all.

—Paul Dehn, *The Sunday Referee*

## *Artists and Models*

(Raoul Walsh—Paramount.)
Jack Benny, Gail Patrick, Ida Lupino.

*Artists and Models* I found staggeringly bad, incredibly inept, boring beyond the wildest flights of the imagination. To do it justice would require the pen of an O. O. McIntyre. The picture is a loosely put together collection of vaudeville acts, with Jack Benny loosely thrown in for good measure. *Artists and Models* is, I think, so bad that you ought to go and see it. Then go home and sit down and think of the hundreds and hundreds of people concerned in its production.

—Russell Maloney, *The New Yorker*

## *The Emperor's Candlesticks*

(George Fitzmaurice—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
William Powell, Luise Rainer.

Personally I do not believe in William Powell as a Polish Count, carrying a message to the Tsar to pardon a patriot while the Tsarevitch is held in Paris. Miss Rainer as a Russian agent is more credible, and, anyway, both are charming. The story is avowedly fictitious, and, indeed, it is hard to reconcile a long-bearded Tsar with glimpses of the Eiffel Tower and the Tower Bridge; but good entertainment of the suspenseful order is provided, decorative and well-populated. The candlesticks are each hollow, for the convenient concealment of vital documents, and Frank Morgan, Robert Young and Maureen O'Sullivan fulfil their contract obligations very agreeably.

—P. L. Mannock, *The Daily Herald*

They say that the stars in this picture are the hero of *Libelled Lady* and the heroine of *The Good Earth*. I don't believe it. No company could waste such talent on quite such pitiful material as this ridiculous story of undated intrigue for Polish nationalism. The dialogue attempts to graft Noel Coward on to William Le Queux; the production, to mingle Lubitsch with the serial thrillers of silent days 20 years ago. Even the

**". . . Decorative and suspenseful"**

## *The Emperor's Candlesticks—*

*continued.*

charm of Powell, in fur coat and cap, breaks down at the cruel stupidity and stark impossibility of the task. But such ineptitude of acting and direction pales in insignificance before the colossal, world-shaking, breath-taking (for once cinematic superlatives are justified) incarnate stupidity that will waste the delicious charm of Frank Morgan, the romantic talent of Robert Young, the latent power of Maureen O'Sullivan, the unfailing graciousness of Henry Stephenson, the genius of Luise Rainer, and the comedic magic of William Powell on a story that is improbable without being fantastic; a drama that does not grip; a chase that has no suspense; and a film that is barely worth the print to condemn it.

—Guy Ramsey, *The News Chronicle*

## *High, Wide and Handsome*

(Rouben Mamoulian—Paramount.)
Irene Dunne, Randolph Scott.

The old Irene Dunne, not the new groomed Dunne of *Theodora Goes Wild*, appears in *High, Wide and Handsome*. She plays a showgirl, oh so generous and unspoilt, in the 1850's, who loves and marries a Pennsylvanian farmer. He discovers oil, gets too busy fighting the wicked railroad trusts, neglects her; so she goes back to the road and returns only in the nick of time with the elephants and trick riders of her circus to defeat the hired toughs who are breaking up his pipelines. There are two hours of this long, dumb and dreary picture; the story doesn't really get under way for an hour; and one is left with a few dim distressing memories: Miss Dunne splashing and kerning away in her bathtub: Miss Dunne singing beside the farm horse (Miss Dunne is the one without the white patch on her forehead): a song by Mr. Kern about "Darby and Joan who used to be Jack and Jill," and masses of irrelevant Mamoulian blooms flowering at the right, the sentimental, time: nature panting to keep abreast with studio passions, flowering for first love and falling for separation.

—Graham Greene, *Night and Day*

**Dorothy Lamour—'High, Wide and Handsome.'**

It is made up of all the most appealing ingredients of comedy, drama, romance, excitement, stern adventures, startling realism and extravagant fiction. It is relieved by the most tuneful of songs. Rouben Mamoulian, its director, has given us something of everything. It is amazing how, in spite of endless variety, he keeps his creation well-knit and balanced. It is made on the epic scale. Irene Dunne is always pleasing, always interesting to watch, always, when she sings, melodious. In a picture so full of crowded action, a picture of such spaciousness, and among the masses of supporting players, it is next to impossible for one particular artist to dominate the proceedings. But of Irene Dunne it can truthfully be said that whenever she appears she makes the charm of her presence felt. Randolph Scott has not been seen to better advantage than in this spectacular musical drama of the oil-fields. This mixture of natural comedy and forceful drama was so good that it might have been inspired.

—Sydney W. Carroll, *The Sunday Times*

*Critical Summary.*

*Here is one of those intriguing films over which the critics cannot agree, so that for each one that thinks it good there is another who hotly condemns it. But that it is good entertainment seems undeniable, and no doubt the adverse criticism would not have been so strong if this had not been the work of Rouben Mamoulian who, at his best, is one of the most gifted directors in Hollywood.*

## *Action for Slander*

(Tim Whelan—London Films.)
Clive Brook, Ann Todd, Margaretta Scott.

It takes courage to make a film like *Action for Slander*. Its people and its problems are out of screen fashion. It is concerned with country house colonels and their ladies, the honour of the regiment, and rotters who will ruin a man's life by accusing him of cheating at cards, by gad! Victor Saville and Tim Whelan, the producer and director, have made their too often caricatured characters very real. The action provides one of the most gripping court scenes ever shown on the screen. It is also one of the most amusing—thanks to Morton Selton's brilliant cameo of a lovable old Father Christmas of a judge.

—R. N., *The Star*

There is a type of genteel British picture in which the characters, anxious to talk and help the plot along and having nothing else to do, spend their time lighting cigarettes, drinking whisky and shaking cocktails. In *Action for Slander* this school of movie technique reaches its height. Everybody consumes alcohol. At a shoot, miles out in the country, they suddenly cluster round the Scotch and start talking scandal. The film, otherwise, is good; definitely decent in a polite way. Clive Brook is the bounder who plays poker rather too well, and has the impudence to love a fellow-officer's wife. Brook, Margaretta Scott, Ann Todd and Edward Chapman talk becomingly over the various whiskies, brandies and cocktails which give them something to hold in their hands. When not doing this they light their cigarettes with bravado. I thought Selton waltzed away with the picture. I shall see it again.

—Connery Chappell, *The Sunday Dispatch*

## *The Road Back*

(James Whale—Universal.)
John King, Richard Cromwell, "Slim" Summerville, Andy Devine, Barbara Read.

Remarque's "The Road Back" was a savage and bitter sifting of the ashes of war, the poignant record of the lives of a group of young German soldiers who tried to find the road back to life after they had spent four years with death. Universal's *The Road Back* is not that. It is an approximation of the novel; it is touched occasionally with the author's bleak spirit. But most of the time it goes its own Hollywooden-headed way, playing up the comedy, melodramatising rather than dramatising, reaching at the last toward a bafflingly inconclusive conclusion.

It is distressing to watch the mutilation of a great theme. Remarque was not writing a comedy; Universal appears not to have recognised that. Remarque was not writing a satire; Universal has not realised that either. As though it were dealing with a routine comedy of the

**"The mutilation of a great theme . . ."**

trenches, it elected Andy Devine to play Willy; it chose Slim Summerville to be an antic Tjaden. The armistice itself has become a matter of comedy. The agonising journey home—of which Remarque wrote with longing and prayer—has been told in terms of slapstick, of French tavern revels and soldiers' choruses. In a way, I envy those who have not read the book: they should have a fine time at the picture, breathing the fire of the early war scenes, marvelling at the sweep of Mr. Whale's cameras, revelling in the mob riots, the lift and surge and humour of Dimitri Tiomkin's expressive musical score.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

Clowning and sentimentalising and melodramatics throw the picture out of focus. Remarque's bitter picture of post-war Germany loses all taste when they try to make it bittersweet. Yet it has moments when the spectator divines the great film it might have been.

—Meyer Levin, *Esquire*

## *His Affair*

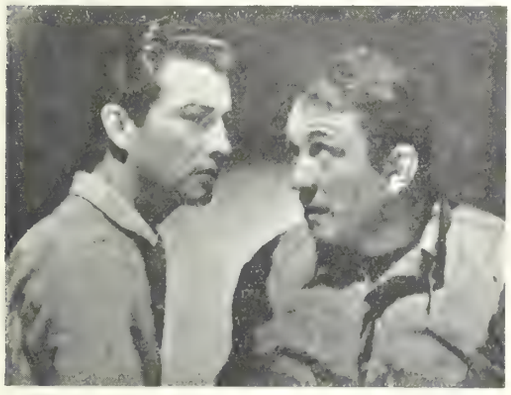
(William A. Seiter—20th Century-Fox.)
Robert Taylor, Barbara Stanwyck, Victor McLaglen.

"Period" melodrama of the America of something less than fifty years ago is the subject of *His Affair*. This is a strong picture, tensely directed by William A. Seiter, and extremely well acted by all the members of a large and competent cast. Its story deals with a secret mission entrusted by President McKinley to a young naval lieutenant to discover the identity of the

man behind a widespread series of bank robberies. The film is packed with action, exciting, and taut with suspense. The characters, too, are well drawn, virile studies, effectively contrasted. Robert Taylor has an excellent part and makes the most of his opportunities. It is, however, the performance of Victor McLaglen as a dunderheaded crook with a passion for practical jokes which is most poignant and memorable.

—M. E. N., *The Sketch*

The story has a touching naivety. It appears that at the beginning of the century the whole of America, and especially the business community, was powerless to cope with a gang of bank robbers, and that President McKinley was reduced to calling in a lieutenant from the Navy to tackle them. It is that sort of story. ("This is our game," says the President to the lootenant. "Yours and mine.") The film, however, is not really so bad as that. Within its own absurd convention it moves with a sort of museum, Boys' Own Paper charm; there are some goodish turns



**" Boys' Own Paper charm . . . "**

in the music-hall. Mr. Robert Taylor is not so successful. Even in his fiercest moments he looks as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth.

—H. M., *The Sunday Observer*

## *Call It a Day*

(Archie Mayo—Warner Bros.)
Ian Hunter, Frieda Inescort, Olivia de Havilland, Roland Young, Anita Louise, Bonita Granville.

It was a good idea of Dodie Smith's to make a play of a day in the life of an English family, from the morning competition for the bath to the turning-out of the light between the parents' twin beds. London and New York both decided that the play was first-class comedy. And that is my opinion of the film. Archie Mayo, the director, has been content to keep most of the Dodie Smith dialogue and to photograph the action as it was already outlined. But for a few extra scenes to give continuity, *Call It a Day* is the same pleasant, if static, piece of stagecraft, hatched out by Miss Smith in her Essex cottage. The cinema simply presents it to a larger audience. The casting is good—it is to Miss Granville's credit as a personality that while she is on the screen one has eyes and ears for nobody else. Yes, a good cast fitted to display the day's adventures of the Hilton family to best advantage. This is your picture if you want a quiet, domestic comedy.

—Ian Coster, *The Evening Standard*

Miss Dodie Smith writes women's plays; which (seeing that women are easily the dominant sex at the box-office) no doubt helps to account for the great success. *Call It a Day* has something for every woman, from a bad attack of Rossetti-worship by a schoolgirl to her elder sister's crush on a philandering artist and their mother's toying with temptation while her husband almost falls for a conventional vamp of an actress and her son conducts an idyll over the fence with the pretty girl next door. Taking it all in all, it is as sex-conscious a picture as the most vicariously amorous playgoer could desire. But in quite a nice way, you understand.

—Campbell Dixon, *The Daily Telegraph*

## *Cotton Queen*

(Bernard Vorhaus—British Independent Exhibitors.)
Stanley Holloway, Will Fyffe, Jimmy Handley, Mary Lawson.

The British Independent Exhibitors in an attempt to protect themselves against the octopus-like circuits and production monopolies, have decided to make films for themselves. Their first, *Cotton Queen*, will be generally released soon. And if it is indicative of the type of film they intend to make they are going to hit some of the major companies a pretty decent smack on the snoot. *Cotton Queen* has a story that is as old as my Sunday suit, but it is in the treatment that it shows such promise. It is laid in Lancashire and they've got the real Lancashire on the screen. The mill interiors are real mills with real looms, not papier maché arrangements worked by heavily manicured extras. And there is Blackpool fair ground with decent sweaty crowds, and the Tower ball-room full of real Lancashire lassies in home-made evening frocks.

The dialogue fits, another rarity in a British film. It is completely unpretentious, but, because of its reality, makes the audience believe in the characters.

Finally, the film moves fast. It ends up with a perfectly glorious car chase that has seldom been bettered. Altogether a very satisfying film. And the public seem to think the same. Well, their reaction to Cotton Queen seemed to point that they go for a comedy-coated reality in a big way. Let's hope the British Independent Exhibitors keep it up.

## *A Castle in Flanders*

(Geza von Bolvary—German.)
Marta Eggerth.

*A Castle in Flanders* is a mild and unpretentious film chiefly to be enjoyed for that pleasant feeling of unreality which arises from seeing one's own countrymen portrayed by foreigners. The film is full of "Sir Archibalds" and "Lady Margarets." Most of the important action, however, takes place in a chateau at Ypres, and depends for its effect on an ingeniously presented suggestion of the supernatural (aided materially by the competent direction of Geza von Bolvary). The ghostly elements, whose details it would be unfair to give away, end unfortunately half-way through the picture and for the rest of the time we are free to admire the fine singing of Marta Eggerth and to wonder yet again what attraction is supposed to rest in the close view of a woman's face, however beautiful, with her mouth wide open during a coloratura trill.

—Basil Wright, *The Spectator*

## *Die Tochter der Samurai*

(Dr. Arnold Fanck—German.)

I can speak only from cursory observations and some reading of production announcements, but it appears to me that German studios are mainly occupied nowadays in turning out conventional comedies and solid dramas, acted mostly in a somewhat old-fashioned, heavy-weight style of which Pola Negri, returning to middle-aged fame, is now accepted as a leading exponent. All German films are supervised by Dr. Goebbels's Ministry of Propaganda, but they are by no means all dosed with politics. On the contrary, I think the trouble is that German producers are usually afraid to tackle themes which might be held to carry a political inference. Anyway, the only interesting film I came across in Germany was *Die Tochter der Samurai;* and this was also the only one with an obvious political moral.

Its story is of a Japanese student who returns to his own country after years of education in Germany, and on the boat falls more or less in love with a German girl. But he has been betrothed since childhood to a Japanese girl, and now he rebels against this prospect and says that in the West he has learnt the value of individual freedom. The German girl, however, assures him that this was a false teaching, and eventually he is reconciled to his native destiny by renewed experience of his country's *ethos* and contact with the soil of his father's farm. The story is never very strong and becomes melodramatic at the end, when the student has to rescue his Japanese betrothed from a suicide attempt in the crater of Fujiyama; but the Japanese backgrounds are delightful, particularly the sequence showing the education of a Japanese schoolgirl.

—Charles Davy, *The London Mercury*

**" Pleasant feeling of unreality "**

Edited by

# GAIL WARNING

Lying in bed the other afternoon, sipping a beaker of champagne and thumbing through the *Daily Worker* with our soft, white hands, we happened (in a different paper altogether) upon an item of news which caused us to turn over and go right back to sleep.

The item in question told how Gail Patrick, Hollywood film-star and queen of good fellows, has solved the servant problem. It appears that the Patrick *estancia* is never without its full quota of peons, serfs, or serving-wenches, thanks to Gail's cute little practice of putting all her domestics under "optional contracts," offering a rise in wages at three and six months if their work is good. "It gives them something to strive for," said Miss Patrick, lowering her yashmak long enough to blow a cloud of cigarette smoke at her interviewer, "and I've not yet lost a maid!"

Nice work, Miss Patrick, but I'm afraid we got there before you. We've been using the contract system for our employees for a long time. Take the case of Desirée, the new night-nurse at the *W.F.N.* Home of Rest for Film Critics on Canvey Island. When we discovered her, she was working for a rival firm, but was not happy there. "All they expect me to do is wear beautiful clothes," she sobbed on our shoulder (we can show you the actual shoulder); "why don't they realise us girls have got to express ourselves?"

We gave her sixpennyworth of stamps and told her to express herself round here. She is now under long-term contract to us and is sitting at my feet as I write, the firelight playing on her delicately-chiselled features. You can get away with that when you're firelight.

Naturally, the first thing we had to find for her was a suitable vehicle, so we had the Editor's bicycle done over and placed at her disposal. Advance publicity was the next question, so we had one or two of the boys around to the back room to meet her. Most of them were loud in their praises of our new discovery. The rest were just loud. Even Rube Weinberger, who we knew had been angling for the girl himself, could scarce forbear to congratulate us. "You've got something there," he said, punching us good-humouredly in the stomach; "that's real star-material." "Thanks," we said, our eyes suspiciously bright, kicking him genially on the shin.

Desirée is still with us, and doing better work than ever. She never complains now, as she used to with her old company, that she is getting the wrong kind of stories. We know the kind of stories *she* likes.

And that, kiddies, is how I met your mother.

# *Thoughts on the Power of the Press, as the Press Calls It*

There have been no belly-laughs
In the *Daily Telegraph's*
Pages
For ages.

By wrapping up the *News Chronicle*
So that it is conical
It comes in handy
For carrying candy.

The *Daily Mail*
Is rather frail
And sensitive.
It resents it if
People sneer
At Lord Rothermere—
Which they do,
Don't you?

The *Morning Post*
Concerns itself most
With the glory
Of the Tory.

After it has gone off the press
Members of the *Daily Express*
Always leave a copy on a low table
To enable
Lord Beaverbrook
To have a look.

I may be a prude
But the *Daily Mirror* strikes me as being distinctly rude.

*The Times* is all society
And piety.

The *Observer* keeps J. L. Garvin
From starvin.

## SAYINGS

"I'm no Beauty Queen."

*—Nellie Wallace*

"I think those women who congregated to see a gentleman named Taylor arrive in London, let down England rather badly."

*—The Ex-Mayor of East Ham*

"I cannot say that I am in the least excited about the prospect of playing opposite Robert Taylor."

*—Maureen O'Sullivan*

"I married for love. He's my first husband and my last."

*—Tallulah Bankhead*

"Hollywood is a magnificent film machine, but in London there is more artistic freedom."

*—Leslie Howard*

"Those who make the Cheddar Caves and Gorge the subject of cheap wit have no sense of sanctity."

*—The Mayor of Nottingham*

# BEAUTIFUL BUT DUMMY

Owing to the fact that *W.F.N.* is a monthly publication, there are very few wisecracks left uncorked on the subject of Mr. R. Lloyd Barrow, the fifty-year-old Weymouth barrister who threatened to take a dummy partner to local ballrooms. "I've danced a lot with dummy partners," said Mr. Barrow. "I'm in two minds whether to take my favourite dummy Dolores regularly to dances."

"Dolores may be dumb, but she is attractive—and her dancing is always faultless," he added.

As an old dummy-dancer-wither myself, I range myself wholeheartedly on the side of Mr. Barrow. Pioneers, no matter what their sphere, have always met with ridicule, but if you imagine that a few horse-laughs are going to stop Mr. Barrow and myself toting our dummies around this season, you're mistaken. There is a bond between a man and his dummy which is not easily broken.

I shall never forget taking *my* favourite dummy, Miss Pilkington, to her first dance. She was in the first flush of womanhood then, trembling on the threshold of life and without a rent in her fabric. As we swung into the rhythm of the mazurka I knew that we were the cynosure of all eyes. Let them call her a painted doll if they wished, but I loved her, every seam and stitch of her.

All that season we were inseparable, although I was gentleman enough to insist that she always brought her chaperone with her, an old horsehair sofa whom we affectionately called Mama. Only once did anything happen to cloud our perfect partnership. That was on the occasion of the Wardour Street Hunt Ball. Miss Pilkington had persuaded me, much against my better judgment, to attend. Was there a man living who could resist the mute appeal of those limpid eyes? While I was having a couple of drinks —hers and mine—in an alcove, a man came up and begged permission to dance with my partner. Foolishly, I granted it. I might have known from the angle of the man's silk hat and the bottle of port stuffed into the top of his riding-boot that he had been drinking. Watching them from behind a horse, my handsome features suffused with anger, I could see the brute's evil face thrust close to hers, and I could tell from the hot flush on the canvas at the back of her neck what direction his conversation was taking. The last glimpse I had of Miss Pilkington was as she was being thrown across the saddle of the man's hunter and carried away, unresisting, into the night. I noticed with satisfaction, however, that her captor had received a black eye.

My new dummy, whom I have christened Greta, is made of sterner stuff and she has survived a season of film balls and carnivals needing nothing more than a few stitches.

# LORUM

Rodney Hobson

## Will You Step into My Beauty Parlour?

Idly turning the pages of one of MGM's publicity bulletins, we happened upon some observations, half-grave, half-gay, by Mr. Grantland Rice's little girl Florence, now making a name for herself in pictures. For the benefit of our readers we plucked a fragrant bunch of them at random and reprint them below, whether you like it or not.

"Any man will admit (says Florence) that women are at their loveliest when they are beautifully gowned. Secretaries or shop-girls would be more attractive, and therefore better able to represent the business, if they were to dress to accentuate their beauty.

"One of the highest paying businesses to-day which is almost exclusively represented by men is insurance. But women could probably sell even more policies, because they appeal to a man's protective instinct. Give women a chance to put a few feminine touches in business and there would never be another depression."

You're telling *us*, Miss Rice? It's quite obvious you've never been to our office, which is known to Wardour Street as the Temple of Venus or the Hall of Human Harps. Our staff are all ex-Railway Queens and look like a million dollars. They spend every penny of their salaries on themselves.

As soon as you enter (which will be pretty soon now, eh?) a lovely creature swathed in a tight-fitting gown and emanating a subtle, provocative perfume, sidles up to you and says in a sibilant whisper, "And what the heck do you want?" She then takes your hat, files it under "Miscellaneous" (which is flattering your hat) and motions you to a divan, softly lit and heaped with silken cushions. It may be a bit crowded, but stick around, brother.

At an onyx switchboard sits our telephone operator. She is dazzlingly beautiful and will one day be able to answer the telephone. At present all she does is to resist the advances of the sub-editors, acknowledged to be among the hardest advances to resist.

Hers is the haunting beauty that drives men mad. Three editors have already hurled themselves into Oxford Street (a street with enough troubles of its own without that happening) and a fourth is waiting for favourable weather conditions before making the attempt. But the majority of us are level-headed enough and have schooled ourselves to look upon the glamorous creatures in our midst as pieces of furniture, dusting them occasionally and every now then stubbing our toe against them as hard as we jolly well can. After all, mere pulchritude counts for nothing unless beauty of the spirit goes with it. And that, I think, is why so many of the visitors to our office ignore the temptresses and make straight for *my* little den. A lovely soul still counts for something.

But to revert to Miss Rice. That idea of women selling insurance appeals to us. This is how we picture it:

*Lovely Insurance Lady:* When's your next birthday?
*Poor Wretched Man:* Did anyone ever tell you . . . you were lovely?
*L.I.L.:* Do you drink to excess?
*P.W.M.:* Why should I—when you are here to intoxicate me with your charm?
*L.I.L.:* Any insanity?
*P.W.M.:* Only that I'm madly in love with you.
*L.I.L.:* It will mature at 60.
*P.W.M.:* Our love is already ripe . . . over-ripe. May I kiss you?
*L.I.L.:* On the dotted line, please.

### METEOROLOGICAL NOTE

"How the knights *are* drawing in," as the Lady Genevieve said, looking down at the row of chargers parked beneath her casement.

* * *

### Taylor's Dummy

"Man Goes Dumb in Cinema" runs a headline.

Didn't I say all we men would soon be imitating that good-looking Mr. R.b.rt T.y.or?

## The Intelligent Boy's Guide to Fleet Street

Put down that volume of Freud, sonny boy,
And come over here to your Dadda.
I've decided how you'll be employed, sonny boy,
When of fame you start climbing the ladder.
I'll make you a newspaper magnate, my lad,
And the ladder you'll climb, wrong by wrong;
Of course, there is many a snag 'n it, my lad,
But here's how you'll best get along:

*Take pages and pages of pictures,*
*Add columns and columns on sports;*
*Then sprinkle with features*
*By epicene creatures*
*Expressing their pale-pink thoughts.*
*Spread thickly with sex and sensation,*
*Add anything slightly obscene.*
*If you* SHOULD *have the space*
*Then you* MIGHT *find a place*
*For a line or two of intelligent comment on world affairs, not that any of your readers will know what the heck you mean.*

**"Patience your Majesty—there's a train smash in the next reel."**

# THEY SAY—

## *"Strip-tease for the sensitive"*

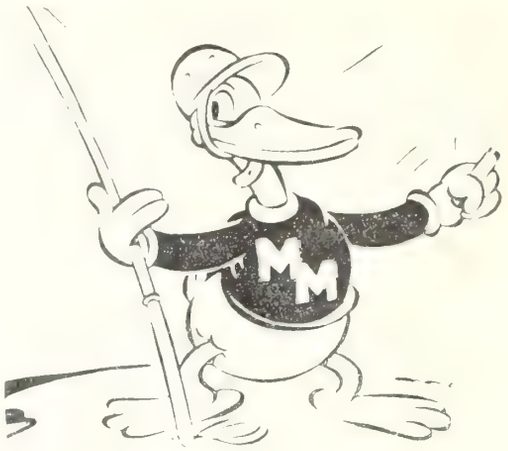
Burlesque having been banished from this city by order of the Commissioner of Licences, a new art is a-borning. Now a citizen can promenade through the town secure in the knowledge that his sensibilities will not be harassed by wanton photographs of girls on the sidewalk bulletin boards. Ever since Commissioner Moss removed burlesque from the theatre last May the whole town has taken on a more wholesome appearance. The cheeks of the people in the streets are fresher, the flesh is firmer, the eyes are brighter and men have shown a gratifying willingness to go home at night.

But the new art of burlesque is still adapted to the special needs of students of anatomy. Like all soundly motivated art, it has form. In the lavish production numbers with their exotic dances and tropical music, glum girls dutifully stand up stage in artistic and unhampered poses. Fortunately, the strip-tease has been entirely eliminated. But some of the former strip-tease artistes have kept pace with the advance of civilisation by mastering new routines suited to their peculiar abilities. Margie Hart, "the sweetheart of Broadway," and one of the most cultivated of the pre-reform clothes antagonists, was the current leading lady of the Eltinge Follies. She was loyally greeted when she first appeared to deliver a rhymed lament for the old days of unrighteousness. Modishly attired in a becoming evening gown she was only the husk of her normal friendly self. But later in the programme the management found an opportunity to offer her in a delicately veiled votary dance that beautifully displayed her best features in a sensational climax. Art has purged the infamous strip-tease of its impropriety.

At the Apollo the neatly jointed Ann Corio has become a dramatic actress. The flamboyancy of the strip-tease has given way to a retiring dramatic incident that innocently discovers many aspects of her personality. The dramatic improvisation is as follows: In a daintily acted prelude a celebrated actress is revealed at the door of her home, generously autographing the book of an abashed admirer. He leaves, she sighs and pensively enters the house. The chief action of the drama occurs in her bedroom. Pure, silent and alone, she languidly disrobes and goes unobtrusively to bed. In the acting of this nocturne her art is peerlessly naturalistic. It is immeasurably more poetic than the hackneyed strip-tease that robbed burlesque of its originality. As a dramatic nudist Miss Corio has broad scope for her powers.

Curiously enough the audience seems unable to distinguish sharply between the old burlesque and the new art which is rising phœnixlike from the strip-tease ashes. But any one trained in the subtleties of the dramatic art can easily appreciate the difference. The anatomy lesson, which was once shrouded in mysterious light, is now conducted on a bright stage against scenery. Once it corrupted the unwary; now it inspires lovers of beauty and nourishes the intellect. It is more sensitive in tone. In short, it is gratifying to realise that the old burlesque theatres are turning their talents to higher things.

—Brooks Atkinson, *New York Times*



## *"A flurry, a squawk —turmoil"*

On to the stage in *The Orphans' Benefit* there strode one whose voice was loud and raucous, whose bearing was domineering, whose attitude was pugnacious and whose manner was insolent in the extreme. He had come to recite "Little Boy Blue" to the assembled orphans, and he was going to recite "Little Boy Blue" or burst. If ever a performer asked for things to be thrown at him, it was he. In short, Donald Duck had arrived.

The cinema has never been quite the same since. The two lovers melt into a lingering, ecstatic embrace, the music swells to a crescendo, and another epic fades to its close. For a moment we rest in blissful reverie, enraptured by Romance; then there is a flurry, a squawk—turmoil. And Romance is gone.

This duck has above all else a genius for disorganisation. Looking back on his long and varied career it is hard to think of a single crisis in which he has, by his presence, done anything but get in the way and cause a disturbance, nor has he ever been of any practical assistance or done anything which has not added to the general confusion. A "tough guy" and an extremely noisy one, he is yet totally incapable of coping with any emergency, and although inspired by considerable determination and self-confidence, he quickly loses his head in moments of stress, dancing up and down in his agitation and quickly upsetting everyone else. As an orator of the "Down with everything" school he would be an instant success in Hyde Park, and when heckled would fly into such a frenzy that he would probably disintegrate with rage. He did, on one memorable occasion, split himself into four when his emotion became too great to be contained in one body.

He is, in brief, a denial of everything that Hollywood holds to be "good form," for he is noisy, conceited, and aggressive, yet wholly lacking in fistic ability, unsentimental, unpractical, inefficient, and insolent, the perfect and glorious antidote for anyone who is suffering from a surfeit of film sportsmanship and "class." In a world of repression, conformation to convention, and inarticulate expression, he stands out as one who calls a spade a spade—and then tries to hit everybody over the head with it.

—*The Times*

## *"Penny-in-the-Slot Education"*

Mr. H. G. Wells' value to his day and age as a disturber of complacency was never better illustrated than in his indictment of our education system delivered before the British Association. It will shake up the thoughts of every person interested in education, except the incurably self-satisfied.

During a long lifetime Mr. Wells has exhibited an immense interest in what people know and think and believe. He is not impressed by his researches. He thinks the public intelligence feeble and uninstructed. He blames, above all, our elementary education, because it does not tell young people enough about the world in which they are to live. The natural curiosity of every child is worth something better, he says, than a magic recital beginning "William the Conqueror, 1066," which passes for history, and a chanting of lists of capes and rivers, which is dignified by the name of geography.

The children of to-day begin life with a startling affection for animals, an urgent curiosity about cars and aeroplanes, an uncannily swift perception of the great forces of electricity and wireless. All around them are facts, hard and interesting, vivid and stimulating. The schools' task is to canalise and satisfy this abounding natural inquisitiveness.

Up to this point we agree with Mr. Wells, yet at the risk of being considered obscurantist, we think elementary education has made strides. Mr. Gradgrind—"Thomas Gradgrind, sir. A man of realities"—wanted boys and girls to be taught nothing but facts. We know that Mr. Wells does not wish children to be taught simply those facts that have seemed transcendently important to him, but there is a danger of more rigid characters falling into that attitude of mind. Even in those up-to-date schools, which take B.B.C. afternoon programmes and show documentary films, there may be such an insistence on "facts—hard facts" of the wider world as to thwart the true genius of education as such a reformer as Dalton conceived it. The heirs of Gradgrind would not be beyond using the wireless and the films for their utilitarian purposes.

What is most lacking in our educational system—it applies to the universities and the elementary schools—is the faculty of wonder, the capacity to keep the young mind perpetually alive to the miracles of daily life, to the incredible adventure of this world into which it is born. The natural zest of the human animal is too soon quenched. The child's eyes become dulled. Custom and convention bind their icy chains around the eager spirit.

Education should be a series of slight earthquake shocks rather than a sleeping draught. We need seismic disturbances to shatter the old stereotypes of thought, the meaningless patterns of behaviour, the penny-in-the-slot responses to given situations, the soporific platitudes of phrase and conduct, the dull acceptance of the third-rate. For his part in waking and shaking the complacent educationist Mr. Wells merits something more flattering than praise—he deserves imitation.

—*The Star*

# WHAT SAY THEY?

## *"Peep-Show Critics"*

How many people, not in the film business, could tell you the names of any film critics?

They would say that they had film reviews to find out what was on and who was in it and what it was all about, and not because of any personal interest in the reviewer or what he had to say.

And the fault is not that of the film critics but of the system under which they work. It is a bad system, damaging not only to those who work under it but to the status and industry which gave it birth.

It is the system of considering and dealing with all film criticism as reportorial stuff.

It is the editorial refusal to acknowledge that the films deserve the dignity of criticism, the editorial attitude, heartily pre-war, of treating the cinema as if it were still in its penny-peep-show-on-the-sidewalks stage, of making the reviewers deal with it as news, collect stories about it, write up around a film, tell of the action, the "new" Miss So-and-so, Director Smith's million-dollar success, a fresh "star"—do anything, in fact, but pay it the tribute of considered criticism.

Reporters are wanted for the job; the reportorial mentality is encouraged; the critic has the reporter's status—no more. It's a very good and honourable status, but it's the wrong one for a critic.

It's a system adjusted to a dead epoch, and it's stultifying to the films and to their makers.

It is perfectly true, of course, that most films don't deserve serious criticism. No more do a good many plays.

Yet James Agate, Charles Morgan, Ivor Brown *et al* go to see them, write about them and educate their readers by the expression of their personal reactions. And when a good play does come along both reader and theatre benefit by reading the opinions and analyses of men whose work has insight, imagination, care, and style.

Whereas, when a good film comes along there is almost no one to say anything in the least illuminating about it, no critic allowed to express the sum of its effect on a highly-trained and sensitised mind.

"A critic's proper task," wrote A. B. Walkley, "is first to put himself in the artist's place and recreate the work within himself; then to excogitate a judgment and put it into literary form.

"Now, it is a deplorable fact that many critics never address themselves to this, their proper task. Their desire for sympathy is too much for them and instead of scrutinising their own impressions, they speculate about other people's."

So does the film critic. He tries to tell you what you will think of this or that picture, to gauge the public reaction. He has to, not because of desire for sympathy, but because his status is such that his own opinions and reactions don't matter.

"In justice to himself, his readers, and the film industry, it is high time that it was decided—whether film criticism is a profession, a job, or a stepping-stone."

—Margery Rowland, *The Era*

## *"Four Head Clowns in a Hundred Years"*

Grock

There have been only four head clowns in England during the last hundred years. Whimsical Walker held the position for nearly forty years. Before him there was Harry Payne—well remembered by many not-such-very-old fogies; and before him there was Tom Matthews, remembered by relations of his who are on the stage to-day; and before him there was the greatest clown of all. I mean Joseph Grimaldi, who thus, although he died in 1837, is not so far removed from our generation.

Who is taking his place? The answer is obvious. It is *Auguste* who makes you laugh. Grock is an Auguste, and two of the Bronetts are Augustes—one of them I am sorry to have to tell you, has just died. Charlie Chaplins—there are many of them now—are a branch of the same family. Auguste wore clothes made for other people. Like Harlequin three hundred years ago, the clown who was to become the Grimaldi clown two hundred years ago, and other clowns right back to the age when the first joke and the first clown were born, Auguste is a thing of shreds and patches.

The present fashion is for Augustes to work in pairs, so that one may score off the other, and it looks as though the old process is happening all over again. The clever Auguste in the suit too large for him is beginning to feel superior, and he who gets slapped is becoming a distinct type—a worried little man, rather like a struggling, unsuccessful stockbroker, with a suit too small for him, a hankering after respectability, and a desire to keep up appearances, even when all those little drops of water are drenching him. We shall have to find a new name for this clown—the one so newly hatched.

Plainly enough the transformation begins with a not unnatural desire to slap instead of being slapped. I think the history of laughter may be discovered in this relationship between the knave and his victim the butt. Just suppose for a moment that all clownship begins with the slippery slide, the stumble and the fall. Very well, the next joke after the mishap which is suffered, must be the mishap which is caused—in other words, the slap, the kick or the blow. There you have a pair of jokes corresponding to the pair of clowns.

According to the way I look at knockabout humour, there are only eight jokes, and the other six all pair off in this way. There are, for example, the joke of the Blunderer who isn't such a fool as he looks, and the joke of the Superior Person who comes to grief through his own cleverness. The third pair includes the joke of Mimicry—every kind of comic imitation from the pantomime horse to yourself trying to amuse the children by crawling about on all fours; with this goes the joke of Excessive Delight which the simple feel when mistaking the unreal for the real.

The remaining pair are the joke of Misconduct, such as stealing your best friend's bottle of beer, and the joke of False Alarm—one representing the criminal instincts of the dare-devil clown, and the other the craven instincts of the cowardly clown. All the tricks that clowns get up to are these eight jokes in some shape or another, and what may appear at first sight to be a brand new joke will turn out to be a blend of two. We owe the *new* joke of this kind to Grimaldi.

Grimaldi's special joke was to construct preposterous things. He made a carriage with a cradle for the body, Cheshire cheeses for wheels, and a broomstick for axle. He turned himself into a Hussar by wearing coal scuttles for boots, brass candlesticks for spurs, a white fur for his jacket, and a muff for his head-dress. What gave point to the joke was the way he joined and subjoined these things, the way he looked when he fell into a brown study over his labours, and the way he rushed in triumph whenever a new idea flashed across his face. Harry Tate is the best exponent of this joke to-day, especially in his demonstration of home-made broadcasting.

—Willson Disher, *The Spectator*

Chaplin

# OVERTIME and the THREAT TO STATUS of STUDIO WORKERS

Following its survey of the conditions of Laboratory workers, published in the August "World Film News," the Film Council here analyses those of studio technicians.

In comparison with the conditions under which technicians work in the film laboratories those of the studio technicians are characterised above all by their variety and irregularity. The following survey is based on the reports received by the Film Council from technicians employed in 14 studios of all types. Side by side with the large studios working exclusively for a single production enterprise, there are others, both large and small, which are partially or wholly hired out to independent producers. Studios predominantly engaged on expensive "super" films are represented, as well as those mainly producing quota pictures or shorts. The majority of our informants work with camera crews or in cutting rooms, but there are also sound and projection technicians among them.

The variety in the scale of the work done in these studios is reflected in the replies to our first two questions:

(1) Average number of working days spent on a picture, and
(2) Average number of pictures produced per year.

The answers to the first question vary from 10 days to 15 weeks, quota films appear mainly to be completed in two or three weeks production time, while from six to ten weeks is given as the most usual period for "supers."

In the same way the number of pictures completed in a year varies (not counting the studios which have not yet been working for a year) from 20 to 3 : quota productions ranging from 12 to 20, "super" productions from 3 to 10, although in some studios both types are now being made.

### *Rush Work*

With pictures being produced like clockwork in standard periods of two or three weeks it is not surprising that work is carried on in a state of incessant rush, even where it is evenly spread over a year. But conditions are very much worse, when, as appears to be the case in the majority of studios, periods of mad rush alternate with times of slackness and, in many cases, unemployment. That this state of affairs is largely due to incompetent planning is shown by the fact that it is most prevalent in some of the large units producing only a few pictures per year. But it also occurs in the case of studios producing quota quickies on contract. Often a given number of films must be completed by a certain date and work proceeds fairly leisurely until about half or two thirds of the allotted time has passed, when a terrific rush commences to complete the contract.

### *"Normal" Working Hours and Overtime*

Under such conditions the conception of what constitutes a "normal" working day naturally shows considerable elasticity. In fact, overtime during production periods has become so regular a feature, that in the majority of studios it appears not even to be recognised as such. The usual number of hours worked per day on production—not counting exceptional rush conditions—appears to vary between 8 to 14 hours, 9½ to 10 hours being the most usual figure reported. During the slack periods between production regular employees who are retained on the staff usually have to be at the studio for eight hours a day. The reports we have received of maximum periods worked at a stretch read like the accounts of nightmares, rather than of what they in fact are, the frequently recurring conditions of creative labour. We were told of a working week including one continuous stretch of 48 hours and two of 24 hours each, the remaining three working days lasting from 10 a.m. to midnight, and one of three weeks, during which the production staff simply did not go home at all. "We are at the call of the company at all times," writes another technician engaged in the production of magazine films. "70 hours without sleep," reports another; "120 hours a week on a particular film," another. 15 to 24 hours worked at a stretch are sufficiently frequent to appear in the reports we have received from 9 out of 14 studios.

After such statements it is a relief to read of one of the American-controlled quota production units: "Company aims at starting at 9 a.m. and finishing at 6 p.m. and has carried this out more or less regularly during the last three years."

### *Work on Saturday Afternoons and Sundays*

The fact that Sunday work should not be a normal feature of employment appears to be recognised in most British studios, though not in all of them. Most of them work on occasional Sundays, but there is at least one studio in which Sunday work is regular during rush periods and all production periods are rush periods. The producers' respect for the Sabbath does not, however, extend to the free Saturday (or Thursday) afternoon customary even in so sweated a trade as that of the shop assistant. With a few exceptions Saturday afternoon work is universal during periods of production.

### *Overtime Payment*

It is not surprising to find that with such working schedules the duty of overtime payment is, with a few exceptions, repudiated by the industry. The exceptions, however, are noteworthy for in one studio overtime is paid at the ordinary time rate for all work in excess of 54 hours per week, and in another at the same rate for work in excess of 60 hours, or exactly 50 per cent more than the maximum *permitted* working time for film technicians in France.

### *Viewing "Rushes"*

To check the quality of their work it is desirable that film technicians should be able to see its results. No technician interested in his job will want to miss seeing the "rushes" of the day's shooting. But even with a normal working day of 9 or 10 hours his enthusiasm will be somewhat chastened, if to do so he has to sacrifice a proportionate section of his lunch hour or free evening. Yet that is the general rule in British film studies.

*(Studio Conditions—continued)*

### *Holidays*

Technicians in regular employment as a rule have two weeks' holidays per year with pay, but even here there are exceptions: "nothing ever arranged" and "yes: about 2 weeks in 2 years" write two technicians employed in the same modern superstudio.

### *Payment During Sickness*

In cases of sickness payment of the full salary for a few weeks (2 to 4) and of half the salary for a similar period in addition appears to be the general rule.

### *General Conditions of Employment*

The conditions we have reported are those obtained during the present period of comparative slackness, after the collapse of the film boom. They are as nothing, compared with those previously prevalent in the studios which were most affected by it. It is worth placing on record the achievement of one of those enterprises—now defunct—which at one time succeeded in producing 33 feature films a year on a single floor by working alternate day and night shifts.

Since those halcyon days, however, the enthusiasm for overtime work has received several salutary checks, the most effective of which is due to the fact that for the shooting of films in studios electric light is required.

But electric lamps are handled by electricians, who are organised in a very powerful union which has already secured for them agreements incorporating the payment of overtime at rates corresponding to time and a half and double time: an addition to the wages bill which deprives the carefree practice of overtime of its most alluring feature.

Another changed factor in the situation is the increasing organisation of the film technicians themselves, whose union is at present negotiating for collective agreements providing for improved working conditions in addition to minimum salary rates.

But there has also, temporarily, we hope, been a considerable decline in studio employment. And if in the laboratories we found a powerful threat to the status of the technician in the tendency for mechanisation, a similar danger faces even the more highly paid studio technicians as a result of the increasingly prevalent practice of short-time contract employment. Obviously the transition from regular to free-lance employment without any compensatory improvement of other conditions implies a dangerous lowering of status.

It is not our intention to comment on the facts disclosed by this enquiry. Our interest in studio conditions, as in film finance, is our concern for British production quality. The facts we have reported reveal, we believe, one of the major causes frustrating the development of British creative ability on the screen.

# BOOK REVIEWS

BOOKS REVIEWED

***Beam Ends***

By Errol Flynn (Cassell. 7*s.* 6*d.*).

***Film Publicity***

By Sydney Box (Lovat Dickson. 4*s.* 6*d.*).

***The Cine-Technician* No. 11**

By Thorold Dickinson and Alan Lawson (Association of Cine Technicians, 6*d.*).

*Beam Ends*, an exuberant tale of mad but quite irresistible youth, recounts an eventful seven-months trip, made by Errol Flynn and three companions in the fifty-year-old yacht *Sirocco*, from Sydney, Australia, to the Gulf of Papua.

How they ever got out of Sydney Harbour, let alone accomplished the perilous voyage to New Guinea, is remarkable, to say the least. Read the author's own description of their seamanship:

> ". . . the one truly remarkable thing about our seamanship was our appalling lack of it. If I took the sextant and 'shot the sun,' my calculation of our position would, as often as not, locate the ship anywhere from the South Pole to the middle of the Sahara Desert. When Trelawny took a sight, we were sometimes more fortunate, and at least had a chance of finding ourselves afloat on an ocean; being a determined fellow, he would never put down his pencil until he did get us on an ocean."

As episode succeeds episode, one is surfboarded along on the crest of the narrative, and it never lags for a moment.

The devil-may-care attitude which characterises Flynn on the screen, and the same unselfconscious charm, leaps from the pages. Often without food and lacking the money to buy any, they charmed it out of an amazingly hetrogeneous collection of people, ranging from barmaids to governors, in a series of hilarious and unscrupulous exploits, though sometimes they earned a few pounds by fishing or ferrying or gambling or on one occasion, dope running.

Such escapades as:

> "We spent a pleasant week at Bundaberg. My hopes of leaving at the end of four days were crushed when Rex fell for the barmaid in the Ocean Front Hotel. There was no alternative but to sit down and hope for his speedy success for there was by now an unwritten but firmly established law aboard the *Sirocco* that all affairs of this sort must be given priority over everything and full opportunity to mature"

explain why a voyage which should have taken seven weeks took seven months.

Perhaps I am over enthusiastic about the book, because I have been running up against too much psychological stuff lately in which all the characters are everlastingly picking over their emotional bits and pieces to see what makes them tick, but *Beam Ends* was like stepping out of a stuffy room into a fresh sea breeze, and the experience is all too rare to miss.

G. FINCHER

We are all familiar with the little handbooks which tell us how to do "France on Ten Pounds" *Film Publicity*, by Mr. Sydney Box, scenarist of Publicity Films Ltd., is a guide after the same manner for the advertiser who is tinkering with the idea of selling his wares with the help of the screen. The comparison with the guide-book for the travel-bitten hard-up is not intended to imply that Mr. Box is telling the tale to his prospects in regard to the costs of advertising from the screen. His figures are sound enough so far as the type of film he is chiefly dealing with—cinema-shown and road-shown unabashed advertising films—are concerned. But the path of the would-be traveller is made beckoningly easy and the whole thing is a little too deftly surrounded with just that bright air of romance and whimsical jocosity which is the hall-mark of the luring tunes played by our Pied Pipers of the holiday abroad. In fact, describing the book as a "Publicity Film" for film publicity may be hitting a little below the belt but the criticism is not unjustified. If an advertiser wants a film to advertise branded goods after those fashions with which Mr. Box is most familiar, he will no doubt be left with the impression that Mr. Box and Mr. Box's company are just the people to do the job. And why not?

Subject to the limitations of his chosen attitude, Mr. Box's survey of the field is adequate for the inquiring beginner. It leaves the snags untouched, of course, and occasionally it draws forth a loud exclamation mark as when Mr. Box solemnly declares that a well-known firm of chocolate manufacturers "add that cinema distribution is the best method they know of covering the country quickly and efficiently with a brief message."

Dealing with the inhabitants of the publicity film world Mr. Box is a trifle disingenuous. "The hours they work would horrify the average bank clerk or Trade Union official. Their whole existence is bound up in films; they give up their few leisure moments to the study and discussion of other studios' productions; they keep abreast of every new technical development; they are all ambitious to make the perfect picture. . . . The studio may appear like a bad dream when you enter it for the first time but you will find as soon as you have learned the ropes and mastered the language that film men are friendly, knowledgeable and the most entertaining company in the world!"

C.H.D.

* * * *

An important summary of conditions in the Soviet film industry forms a special supplement to the Aug.–Sept. number of *The Cine-Technician* No. 11. This is a report made by the delegates appointed by the Association of Cine Technicians to visit Russia for the 1937 May Day Celebrations. The delegates were Thorold Dickinson and Alan Lawson, and they have compiled a report of considerable documentary importance, arranged under such headings as: Sound, studios, distribution, newsreels, laboratories, production routine, etc. It has as introduction a general survey of social conditions in the U.S.S.R.

# MEETINGS AND ACQUAINTANCES

IRVING ASHER greets you from behind a desk the length of a cocktail bar. You half expect to see him wearing a white hat and coat and fixing you a highball.

Asher wouldn't mind what he wore, so long as the sleeves could be rolled up. In his six years as production chief at Warner Brothers' Teddington Studios, he has done as much as any man for the prestige and profit of British pictures. Admittedly, his product is mainly of the frivolous variety; but Asher thinks there are enough suet puddings being turned out by the home studios without him slaving over the same hot stove.

If you are one of those who take pleasure in panning British films, stay away from Mr. Asher's door. He's got no time for you. "When a kid makes a typical kid's mistake," says Asher, "what do you say? 'Give him a chance—he's young yet,' that's what you say. And that goes for British pictures. They're still growing, still learning. When we want advice we have to turn to Father, the American Industry. And even Father doesn't know all the answers. Very soon now we'll be telling *him*."

Asher has some interesting things to say about his players. "We believe in keeping a 'stock' company of some thirteen or fourteen people under contract. Of these, perhaps three or four are rated as stars. These are our heavy artillery; each has his own line of attack; stories are fashioned to fit them.

"That leaves us with our supporting players—our mobile troops, ready and able to take any part that may come their way. We encourage our young people to play as many widely different rôles as possible. We avoid 'typing' them as we would avoid the plague. We release them, if they wish, for seasons at neighbourhood theatres, such as the Embassy. If they play gilded youth in one picture, we knock the gilt off them for the next. If they have to eat caviare for a scene this week, we try and fix them up with crusts and a coffee-stall for the week after.

"Only in that way do we consider a player can find his real *métier*. Then and only then is he ready to be groomed for stardom.

" 'Typing ' a player too early in his career is one of the worst sins a studio can commit. Take Myrna Loy—card-indexed by Hollywood in her early days as Exotic Spy Type, Officers For The Use of. She snapped out of it in time—hundreds don't. Chili Bouchier—one of the best bets on our payroll at the present time, is another example. She has built up a second career with us in parts totally different from those in which she made her earlier appearances.

"We believe, too, in keeping an eye open for local talent. Clem Lawrence, tough guy of *Transatlantic Trouble* and now making *Quiet Please*, is a case in point. Clem was engaged as a trainer to the executive staff, the idea being that a daily workout might help preserve their youthful contours. We saw possibilities, tried him in a picture. He is now under contract and making his third film for us. The executives' stomachs are right back where they were, but what's an executive's stomach when there's star material around?"

Asher started in pictures as a prop. boy with Universal. It took him two trips to England before he decided to settle, renting studios at the site where the Warner Brothers lot stands today. In 1934, the old premises were enlarged and Asher began to build up the organisation as it is today. The bulk of those who started with him then, are still there. And it doesn't seem a day too long.

Star-building keeps Asher busy, because as fast as he builds them, the Warner Bros. American set-up ships them over there. Errol Flynn, Ian Hunter, Patric Knowles, Sybil Jason, the late

Paul Graetsch—all graduated from Teddington. Keith Faulkner and a new discovery, James Stephenson—described by Asher as the British Walter Huston—seem to be heading the same way. The local authorities are thinking of putting up a sign on Teddington station—"Change Here for Hollywood."

They take Asher's stars—but they also take his pictures. *The Perfect Crime*, *Mayfair Melody* and *You Live and Learn* are all booked for American presentation.

Asher is working to a 16-picture schedule this year; aims to make 20 in 1938. These will fall into two main classes: (*i*) Melodrama, a sure-fire proposition in the provinces; and (*ii*) Comedies with tried comics such as Max Miller, Claude Hulbert.

When Mr. Jack Warner arrives at the Teddington Studios from Hollywood this month, he'll say the old place has changed. The buildings may be all decked out to resemble the front of a theatre, a night-club or whatever their current pictures in production call for in the way of an outdoor set.

They believe in using all they've got down at Teddington. And Mr. Asher thinks they've got plenty.

**Rodney Hobson**

EDWARD R. MURROW, lately appointed European director for the Columbia Broadcasting System of America, is already getting to grips with some interesting material. He has already broadcast to America relays from the Salzburg Festival, talks from the fighting zone in the Chinese-Japanese conflict, an actuality broadcast from an Essex inn and an *ad lib* programme from the pier head at Brighton. Is emphatic that the English man in the street is much more articulate than his U.S. counterpart; which surprises us. Periodically he brings English statesmen and men of letters to the microphone to report English life and interpret English policies to the American people. Widely travelled, a brilliant linguist and a keen student of foreign affairs, Murrow brings many essential qualities to his job.

Previously engaged in educational work and an active figure in international student organisations, he later became director of Columbia's Talks Department in the United States before taking up his present post.

At present planning a series of programmes from regions of England and Scotland. An early one will deal with the Welsh coal industry. He has much faith that by using radio to put the common peoples of the world in touch a service can be done to international understanding.

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Familiar to the purlieus of Wardour Street is the determined figure of NORMAN HIGGINS striding on its perpetual quest of unusual programmes for Cambridge's Arts Theatre. Equally familiar to the intelligentsia of the University is the same figure as, two hours later, encased in immaculate evening dress, it takes its place in the foyer of the Arts to do the evening's honours.

Higgins' career as a Cambridge exhibitor was preceded by a spell of service in the R.A.F. For some years he managed the Tivoli and by his skilful choice of programmes made it one of the best-beloved cinemas in the town. His native energy and efficiency combined with an intimate knowledge of changing undergraduate tastes makes him a singularly fortunate acquisition for the Arts.

* * *

DITA PARLO, whose superb acting of the bride in Vigo's *L'Atalante*, will be long remembered by film connoisseurs, has been making an English version of *Mademoiselle Docteur* under Granville's direction at Worton Hall. She played the lead under Pabst in the original French version made in Paris. Her lingual abilities (which include German) have been exploited in earlier films by directors of the calibre of Joe May and Kirsanoff. Hungarian by birth, Dita Parlo will be welcome in the British cinema if only because she is one of the few European movie actresses who have never confused the techniques of stage and screen.

# PEOPLE WITH PURPOSES

## *NEWS NOTES*

Following on the great interest shown by educationists in the programme of the Tatler Theatre, London, G.B.I., in co-operation with Mr. Arthur Jarrat, are arranging monthly shows of educational films in twelve leading cities. Each programme, will treat some definite subject and among those chosen so far are *The Nineteenth Century*, *Mountains*, *Aquatic Life*, *Public Services*, and *The Country in Autumn*. Headmasters will be consulted on the choice of programmes and if they prove successful the scheme will be extended.

* * *

The Realist Film Unit have now completed their first three productions. *The League at Work*, directed by Stuart Legg, was made in English and French. Both versions have been shown regularly in the League of Nations Theatre at Geneva, while the French version has also been presented at the Paris Exhibition. *Children's Charter*, directed by Basil Wright, presents in a novel and forceful way the whole problem of the English educational system of to-day. Wilson Harris, Editor of the *Spectator*, is the commentator, and also appears in the film.

*Smoke Menace*, directed by John Taylor, deals with smoke abatement and shows clearly how the damage done by smoke to both buildings and health has become a social problem of major importance.

Three more productions are now in hand, including one on Shale Oil, which is to be shown at the Empire Exhibition, Glasgow. The film will trace the historical growth of its industry, it will show how this Scottish industry ante-dates later developments in America and the East, and how modern technique in this field originated from it.

Realist Film Unit will shortly be moving to their new headquarters at 34 Soho Square; phone: Gerrard 1958–9.

* * *

The Travel Association Film Unit is now working on the production of *London on Parade*, a film intended to present London to the outside world as a modern and progressive city. Several documentaries are also being prepared for showing in South America.

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A new film entitled *Horse Sense*, made by Dick Bird, has been produced in Canada. It deals with the journey of some Canadians to England, and a cast of natural actors was used. The film was started on the Saskatchewan Prairies and was completed last month in England.

* * *

Scannain Eireann, the Irish Film Company, are now completing two educational films in Gaelic —one of these being in colour. Other films in Gaelic are also in production and educational films from foreign countries will be imported and re-edited in Gaelic for showing in Irish schools.

* * *

Educational and General Services have treatments for four films in hand. Details of these are at present not available.

* * *

The Irish Travel Association Film Unit has in production several more films under J. N. G. Davidson's direction. One of these will show twenty-four hours of life in Ireland.

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Having experimented with the showing of educational films in schools the Middlesex Education Committee have decided to extend this practice. The Middlesex Schools Film Society has been formed so that teachers may exchange views on films shown.

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The Brentford School, Essex, last year showed more than 200 films, and this year hopes to give films an even more important place in their curriculum. Mr. Buckland Smith, the organiser of the scheme, expects to be able to show more than 700 films in the coming year. And he reckons that the average cost per pupil will be less than ½*d*.

* * *

The studio which is being established by the Religious Film Society was opened on September 28th by Mrs. J. Rank.

* * *

The films sponsored by the Workers' Travel Association are now in production. One deals with their hostels and the other, directed by Ralph Bond, concerns a cruise in the Mediterranean.

* * *

Cambridge Film Productions have completed a very excellent descriptive film of the vitamins factor and nutrition (see Film Society News). Geoffrey Innes made it.

* * *

Gas industry goes into distribution in a big way this winter. Among the films to be distributed are two new cookery films by Boulestin; a film on kitchen planning; one on Kensal House; and one on housing; also Basil Wright's important new film on Schools.

* * *

Eight new productions are in hand at the G.P.O. Len Lye is cutting his first screen romance. He shot it straight, in a manner of speaking—a new departure for him. What comes next, Len only knows. Evelyn Spice has just left the unit—bequeathing it her newest film, a sympathetic essay on messenger boys referring especially to vocational guidance. It is to be released in October.

The two major productions are *Road Transport* and *Big Money*, both on the cutting bench. The first discusses vital problems of the road and their evolution—to music by Dr. Ernst Meyer. The second is Harry Watt's characteristically clear version of the story behind the Post Office Estimates, and their position in the national economy.

Three shorts—*The Copper Web*, small-time saga of the underground plunge of the telephone wires; *North of the Border*, or *Problems of a Postman in Scotland; Book Bargain*, or *Why the Directory costs you Nothing*. Finally a robust comedy by Massingham about the wish-fulfilment of a country postman. Those who remember his last film—*And So to Work*—will recognise the close observation and shrewd touch of this essentially cinematic humorist.

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In Somercotes Central School, Alfreton, Derbyshire, older boys are taught the theory of the cinema, and several have already made successful operators. The names of Rotha, Korda, Grierson, Dean, etc., mean much more than occasional flashes on their local cinema screens. and scenario writing is a practical form of English composition.

A 35 mm. projector, found in the "scrap room" of a picture theatre, has been re-conditioned by one of the masters, Mr. H. A. Summers, and some of the boys. It is fitted with a 1,000 watt lamp and an a.c. motor—a re-winder has been made in the Handicraft room. Films are supplied by the Empire Film Library, Austin Motors, C.W.S., Publicity Films, Gasparcolour, Ford Motors, the Dental Board, Educational Films Bureau, etc., and a programme of 86 films has been made out to March, 1938. Performances take place after school, usually lasting for a couple of hours.

The scheme, started and carried on by Mr. Summers, has no financial help from authorities. Boys bring contributions when they can.

* * *

Subjects of sociological interest play an important part in Strand's current programme. With *To-Day We Live* finished and trade-shown, the non-theatrical version, *To-Day and To-Morrow*, dealing with every aspect of social service schemes, is being cut by R. I. Grierson before presentation at a Gala Charity Performance at the Regal, London. Another film of the unemployed is Stanley Hawes's *Here Is the Land*, for the Land Settlement Association, which reaches show-copy stage this month.

Having finished *The Future's in the Air*, Shaw is with London Films at Denham to re-make *The Conquest of the Air* for Korda. After this he will cut his Malayan film *Five Faces*. The other air films, *Air Outpost*, and *Air Pilots*, by Ralph Keene are ready for showing. Other subjects from the Australian Unit's trip to be cut this winter are *Rice Harvest*, *Rosevale Ranch* and *Dancing Island*, while a separate non-theatrical programme is being prepared for Imperial Airways.

A unit under W. Pollard is in Cornwall making a film of its traditions and industries. Two more non-theatricals, *Boats that Save Life*, for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, and *The Film of Paint*, for the Lead Industries Development Council are finished, both being directed by Miller Jones and cut by Oliver Cheatle.

The twelve *Animal Kingdom* Zoo and Whipsnade films are all in production under the supervision of Professor Julian Huxley. Six of the series will be ready by the New Year, the remainder by Easter.

When Paul Rotha, by whom all the above films were supervised, left for the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in September, his duties were taken over by Stuart Legg, who has been loaned for a period to Strand Films by Film Centre.

# GERALD SANGER, MOVIETONE NEWS

## — Hits Back with a Silk Glove!

Glen Norris's wide-open Letter to Gerald Sanger, published in September W.F.N., is replied to below by Gerald Sanger

## "We really agree . . ."

DEAR MR. GLEN NORRIS,

In the September *World Film News*, you addressed an open letter to me which shows you as indeed more than just an observant member of the newsreel public. You are a knowledgeable and discreet critic, to whom the names on the screen are more than names; they are personalities of whose functions you are aware. Which makes me guess that you must be an old acquaintance under another name to whom I gave a wide-open interview some weeks ago. (Sorry, Mr. Sanger, my turn to say "you're wrong."—G.N.)

In the face of such immaculate information, it is difficult to decide what attitude I should take. It is proverbial that the better the advice, the more unacceptable it becomes. However, avoiding pique, I assure you that our aims coincide precisely with what you say ought to be our practice.

Twice a week, and fifty-two weeks in the year, we strive to provide a polished, compact, fast moving, varied newsreel, from material which may reach us at any time, and in any form, during the three days' incubation period; not knowing what may happen in the last few hours of "make-up" to upset the calculations of our early forecasts. So many are the factors which complicate our work, that I often blame myself for having introduced, as a further ambitious embarrassment, the multi-voice system which you commend. With one commentator, the work of producing and editing is immensely simplified. He is always on the spot; he has one style; he is a known quantity. With our system, we have committed ourselves to obtaining the most suitable voice for each given subject.

This leads me to suggest that you did us less than justice in your felicitous reference to our opposite number in New York. The multi-voice system started with British Movietonews, from whom Movietonews of New York adopted it and glorified it. We were a few days ahead of our confreres in reducing titles to a few words superimposed over a first scene. We pioneered with a feminine voice, that of Miss Beryl de Querton, the first newsreel commentatrice. I mention these instances, not to disparage Movietonews of New York, but to indicate that we have ourselves participated in evolving the model which you admire, and of which alas! you feel we fall short.

One of the controversies which will always rage in newsreel procedure is that on which you have placed yourself irrevocably on record: namely, which comes first, picture or commentary? The orthodox method (you call it the "old fashioned system") is to write commentaries to previously cut pictures. You differ from this view. You believe in the system of "telling the story in fast moving commentary, and illustrating it (afterwards) with exciting shots." Without blenching, I must admit that in this view you are right. But then, so are we! Only your information is wrong!

Purist practice, as mentioned above, is to cut the picture first, and leave it to the text-writer's ingenuity to accommodate his dramatic periods or his wisecracks to the footage thus fixed by the cutter's thumb and finger. Contrary to your confident assertion, this is the fierce creed (amounting almost to a fetish) of New York's newsreel offices. It speaks volumes for the skill of Mr. Lowell Thomas and his text-writer, Mr. Prosper Burnaelli, that they can turn out such an invariably slick job under such a handicap. But British Movietonews has never committed itself to this policy. On the contrary, with us the text-writer is given the latitude to draft his ideas in definite form first, before the negative is cut.

So you and ourselves really agree, although you don't realise it. I personally agree with you even in your strictures, which amount to this: that we are not perfect according to our model, yet. Fortunately, we are never satisfied with ourselves; and if there are still enormous potentialities before us, as you aver—well, so much the greater incentive.

Yours sincerely,

**GERALD SANGER.**

DEAR MR. SANGER,

I am overwhelmed by the charming grace of your reply—knocked against the ropes by your silken parry to my well meant but hard hitting lefts. I almost hope that some day I may really be the recipient of one of your wide-open interviews—they must be stimulating! Gladly I hold over my next "Wide-Open Letter"—hand my page to you!

My congratulations on your achievements in leading America to multi-voiced commentaries, superimposed titles, and "commentatrices." As you say, these innovations were adopted in London and New York within such a short time of each other, that an outsider was led to believe that the lead had come from across the Atlantic.

But I must take up your smooth arguments about "commentary-before-picture." I think perhaps the fault is mine, in that I misused the word COMMENTARY. I am not so unpractical as to suggest that the ACTUAL WORDING of every commentary should be written before the picture is even shot. SCRIPT is the term I should have used. I firmly and irrevocably believe that every newsreel story, however slight, however unexpected, should be scripted beforehand—with rough indications of the line of thought of the commentary, the general angle of the picture, the type of sound and music.

You say that in America it is a fetish to cut the picture first, write the commentary after. When Mr. Lowell Thomas was over here at the time of the Coronation, I had the pleasure of an interview with him. He told me of the endless discussions that he and Truman Talley—your opposite number in the U.S.—had had about the Coronation Commentary for America; how they had planned the presentation weeks beforehand. They may not have put a single word on paper, but if it wasn't mental scripting, I'll let you write my page next month as well!

You say that your text-writers DO draft their ideas before the cutting. I reply that the result, as I see it on the screen each week, gives no indication that they do. There's all the vocal padding, all the "what-can-I-say-now" feeling associated with "the old fashioned system." There must be something wrong with your text-writers—or don't your cutters follow the drafts?

I still claim that the last two rounds are mine.

Yours sincerely,

**GLEN NORRIS.**

# NEWSREEL RUSHES

## NEWSREEL NOTES BY THE COMMENTATOR

**OLDEST NEWSREEL** in Britain to-day is Gaumont-British, the modern sound version of the old Gaumont Graphic, started nearly 40 years ago. Second in seniority is Pathé Gazette, of which the silent version began with the reign of George V in 1910. By the side of these two veterans, the other reels are youngsters—the Empire News, silent forerunner of the Universal Talking News, on the screen since 1924—British Movietone, since 1929—Paramount, since 1931. Now the year 1937 must be added to the list of historic newsreel dates—for this month sees the birth of a sixth reel—NATIONAL NEWS.

**A SCOTSMAN'S BRAIN CHILD,** is this youngest reel; for its appearance marks the realisation of a long-cherished wish of N. (for Norman) Loudon, Chairman of one of Britain's smaller but thoroughly efficient production and distribution companies, Sound City Ltd. Like many another Scot, Norman Loudon has gained a remarkable reputation for a sound business sense. With small, inexpensive, second feature pictures, he has succeeded where most others have failed, in never yet finishing a financial year with a loss. After day-dreaming for several years about the possibility of starting up a newsreel, Norman Loudon's plans finally took practical shape when he found a truly practical editorial brain to help him.

**A LIFELONG NEWSREEL TECHNICIAN** is how Cecil R. (for nothing) Snape likes best to be described. For thirteen years editor, first of the Empire News, later of the Universal Talking News, he has personally supervised the production of more than 25,000 screenewstories; has worked, eaten, played, slept, always within reach of a telephone. But in the midst of his tearing, bustling life, Snape found time to day-dream too. His secret hope was for more scope to try out his production ideas than was possible within the somewhat restricted policy of Universal. He found, in Norman Loudon, a man with the power to make that hope a reality. So Snape left Universal last July, and National News was conceived. One feature at least, he decided to carry over to his new reel—a single commentator, personally plugged by name. He did not take R. E. Jeffry with him, instead he traded on the publicity value of a classic mistake.

**WORLD FAME** was thrust upon a comparatively little known B.B.C. commentator, when he committed a microphonic *faux pas* that swept round the world, finally to oust the Little Audrey stories as Public Silly Saying No. 1. Lieut.-Commander T. (for Thomas) Woodroffe is one of the B.B.C.'s latest recruits from the Navy. Without any previous experience of using his voice in public other than barking orders, he discovered he had a natural flair for vocal description; found his way on to the permanent staff of commentators. One of his early jobs was to disguise himself as a mere Tommy, describe the Aldershot Tattoo from the arena. Given most of the naval commentating jobs, he was sent to Spithead for the Coronation Naval Review. Night had fallen—the moment had come for the fireworks—the strain of being back on his old ship with his old messmates was too much for Woodroffe—in a flash of mental weakness, the world heard him say: "The fleet's all lit up—when I say lit up—I mean—with lights." The London announcer in charge of the programme faded him out—Woodroffe was an international figure—another of the B.B.C.'s "bad boys." As commentator for National News it remains to be seen whether he realises fully that there is no connection whatsoever between painting word pictures for an audience of listeners, and keeping up a thread of informed comment for an audience of watchers. Without that realisation, success in his old job, will be no key to success in his new. National News is sufficiently proud of its first commentator to promise to show his picture on the screen in the main title of each issue.

**National's Woodroffe . . . "disguised as a Tommy"**

**BUT THE BACKBONE** of the National News staff must be its camera and sound men. For them, it has drawn wisely, from some of the most experienced men of its rival reels. On the cameras will be Eric Owen and J. Humphries from G.B., Jerry Somers and S. Swan from Universal, and S. Bartholomew, who has been free-lancing for Pathé. The first sound truck will be run by Leslie Murray from Movietone—a second truck is already ordered. Re-recording of sound, music, and commentary by F. Ralph of Movietone.

**DISTRIBUTION** will be through Norman Loudon's own Sound City Distributor's organisation. So far no official announcement regarding any tie-up with one of the major cinema chains, such as Odeon or Union, is announced. As long as no such fixed and steady market is assured—such as is enjoyed by Pathé with the A.B.C. chain, or G.B. with its own chain—most shrewd observers feel that the financial position of National News cannot but be weak. The open market of "free" cinemas—privately owned houses, and small, locally owned chains—is hardly large enough to support a newsreel with a world coverage as claimed by National News.

**MOST EXCLUSIVE FEATURES** promised for the new reel are as yet announced to be "strictly secret, to prevent our rivals from pinching our ideas." That time-honoured phrase may hide something really startling, or may merely imply a state of unpreparedness, of ideas not yet bearing fruit. A few small plums that have so far fallen from the tree: 1. National News will break away from the rigid custom of an 850 ft. issue, will be printed in three different lengths—a five star, 1,200 ft.—a four star, 800 ft.—a three star, 500 ft. Hiring cost of the three issues will vary in proportion. 2. Make-up of the reel will consist of a smaller number of bigger stories—most short "flash" stories will be eliminated. Each story will be "built up" to show the "news behind the headlines." But no explanation is offered of how the enormous handicap of a new reel, the lack of a library of previously shot negative, is to be overcome. 3. Commentator Woodroffe is to use a fast moving, American style of commentating; is to collaborate in the writing of scripts for stories before they are shot; is to work in close co-operation with the editor and cutters.

**THERE IS SOME PROMISE,** at any rate, that National News intends to break away from tradition, in a section of the film world where everyone and everything seems to be stuck in a deep, deep rut of dullness. Final judgment must come only after the product has been seen on the screen; but that a young, 100 per cent British reel may show the old hands just where they ought to be, is indeed an occasion for joyous anticipation.

**LAST JULY,** when Cecil Snape, longtime Editor of Universal Talking News, changed over to National News, his old job was filled by a shuffle round within the Universal organisation. Managing Director Cecil Jeapes, moved into the editorial chair with Brian Saveall as joint editor.

Commentating will continue entirely in the throat of R. E. Jeffrey.

# SOMETHING SHOULD BE DONE

## About the Creeping Paralysis of

# FILM CRITICISM

## says film critic, Leslie Withers

THE recent banning of *Film Weekly* from trade and Press shows by Columbia Pictures again brings up forcibly the strange position of the film critic in this country and the lack of dignity with which the job is invested as well as the invisibility of authoritative support.

Because a dramatic critic commented adversely on a Cochran production no one has heard of C.B. preventing him from attending, in an official capacity, all of his future shows, yet the film critic is constantly subjected to insults of this kind. And the *Film Weekly* incident proves that London is no less a danger spot for the critic than the Provinces.

I have had some years of experience as a Provincial film critic and know that in many instances it is an uphill fight to be honest yet avoid actual declaration of war by film renters who, ignoring a hundred laudatory reviews of their companies' films, have adopted more than a truculent attitude because of one piece of warranted criticism.

On one occasion a few years ago I reviewed a certain film adversely (my opinion being endorsed later by almost every other critic of standing) and a deputation arrived at my office seeking my resignation. Failing to achieve that object, I was immediately banned from their key cinema for several years. It is not difficult to see who lost most heavily by that action.

It is inconceivable to me that a supposedly adult-minded business should prefer a continuous stream of sickly puff paragraphs to conscientious criticism, yet its high-handed moves demonstrate that it has a great desire to dam the clean stream and turn on only the tap which emits fizz.

The film trade has a perfect right to demand that newspapers should entrust film criticism only to those fully qualified for the job (and we know this is not always done) and also they have the right to object strongly to the sacrificing of a costly production demanding serious consideration on the altar of a few pungent wisecracks (and we know, too, that this is often done). But where the Press should adopt a stand is on the question of the sincerely expressed opinions of a critic who has a full knowledge of his subject.

I can see no hope for the future if the problem is not attacked at once. I say this because there seems strong evidence that, with a few wise-minded exceptions, film companies' one desire is to make personal and commercial war against all who dare to suggest that every film is not an epic. I have been received coolly for days by renters handling films which they knew were bad but hated seeing so in print. Sometimes coolness develops into open war by the withdrawal of advertisements.

It is needless for me to detail here the old arguments concerning the public's resentment against film news obviously inspired by servility and fear and the fact that such resentment rebounds upon the heads of those who bring it about. The cinema has got beyond the stage where the public is satisfied only with news of a star's diet, dress and loves and the synopses of the films in which they appear. Producers like Thalberg and Korda have made movies worthy of consideration by the cream of the world's intelligentsia.

I myself—and with the support of my firm—have endeavoured to subject the films which I have seen to honest scrutiny and I have found that when many of such scrutinies resulted in partial or complete condemnation, film companies are rarely anything but resentful, despite the fact that I may have declared admirable the previous dozen movies they made.

It would be a futile critic who consistently asserted his infallibility, but he is no critic at all who does not resent the growing antagonism of the film industry against this branch of newspaper life. The critic who is sincere and honest is read; therefore he is the film industry's best friend in the long run.

In my opinion the matter will grow to alarming proportions unless action is taken by such bodies as the N.U.J. and the Institute of Journalists. That action, I submit, should be a meeting between qualified representatives of the newspaper and film industries. Bitter things might be said but they would be preferable to the creeping paralysis of fearless film criticism which is now taking place.


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# LETTERS

## Have Films Advanced?

It is a notable fact that Hollywood has produced more progressive films in the past 25 months than in its entire past 25 years.

A glance at the American film from 1912 on shows a few significant and socially valuable pictures: *Intolerance* by David Wark Griffith comes to mind. Also *The Italian* (Thomas Ince), *Greed* (Eric von Stroheim), *Tol'able David* (Henry King), *Pilgrim* and *Gold Rush* (Chaplin), *The Crowd* (Vidor), and two or three others.

Side by side with these films have come many times the number of anti-labour and pro-war films such as *Americanism versus Bolshevism*, *Civilisation*, *New Moon*, *No Greater Glory*, *Friends of Mr. Sweeney*, *Gabriel Over the White House*, *Golden Harvest*, *Cavalcade*, *Pilgrimage*, to name but a few.

Since the war Hollywood has gone through many metamorphoses, chief of which was the coming of sound film and the passing of control into the hands of the bankers and brokers; and together with that, the development of trade unionism in the movie industry.

In recent months there have been practically no prominent anti-labour films on the boards. There have been a number of films glorifying war. We have even had two outstanding if imperfect anti-war films in *Road Back* and *They Gave Him a Gun*. In *Life of Zola*, Warner Brothers have given us a profound and useful political document against reaction.

No one will deny that one of the chief reasons for this change for the better has been the tremendous growth of unionism and anti-fascism in the country, particularly in the movie industry itself. Constant agitation by audience organisations for better films has also been responsible for films like: *Life of Zola*, *Make Way for Tomorrow*, *Fury*, *Informer*, *These Three*, *Dead End*, *Black Legion*, *Life of Pasteur*, *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, *Winterset*, *The Good Earth*, *They Won't Forget*, *Captains Courageous*, *Modern Times*.

Compare these fine films of the past year and a half with the so-called better films of three or four years ago: *The Fountain*, *House of Rothschild*, *Sorrel and Son*, *The Crusades*, *Clive of India*, *Life of Vergie Winters*, *No Greater Glory*, *Of Human Bondage*, *Whom Gods Destroy*, *Little Man What Now?* *One More River*, *British Agent*, *Power and Glory*, *Heroes for Sale*, *Mad Game*.

Who says the movies have not advanced!

DAVID PLATT

## Tribute to Gershwin

It seems strange that the only mention in *World Film News* of George Gershwin, one of the most amazingly popular contemporary composers, is the reprint of an article by Mr. Spike Hughes, belittling his best loved composition. Mr. Hughes condescendingly remarks that *Rhapsody in Blue* is "full of tunes" and "snippets of melody." It may interest Mr. H. to know that the great majority of musical classics are equally full of "tunes" and "melodies."

LESLIE PARKER

## "I Won't be Hectored"

*says Sidney Bernstein, replying to Hector McCullie's attack on double-feature programmes*

To reply to Mr. Hector McCullie's heavy artillery, I generally prefer the second feature to the first. So do many of my customers. Give them or me the choice of seeing Mr. Tauber's larynx in action or Mr. Durante's proboscis performing tricks of montage, and both they and I plump every time for the latter ornament. We prefer noses to throats.

And then there's "*Romeo and Juliet*." Mr. McCullie's general complaint seems to me that he had to sit through three-quarters of an hour of "shooting up" before he was able to get down to the real, the serious, the vital task before him.

For me the shooting couldn't have started too soon—I only wish they had done it in Hollywood before *Romeo and Juliet* was finished. That's the pity of it nowadays; the shooting always starts too late, especially in studios.

But all this talk of frustration is unreasonable.

**Sidney Bernstein**

McCullie must know that cinemas are compelled to display the showing times of all films and he knows too that no one need go in before their favourite opera or drama is showing.

At the Bernstein theatres we go further and announce on all our posters and advertising the times at which each picture comes on.

But if I am wrong, can 550,000 weekly Bernstein customers be wrong? They seem to regard the facilities for ambling in midway through a feature as a boon and a blessing.

It is much more convenient for the working man and his wife, for the shop assistant and the city commuter to be able to walk into a continuous performance than to be regimented and tied to a time that suits those whose working hours and meal times are under their own control.

The fact that *Romeo and Juliet* and the later Tauber film were not very successful (and they are the films Mr. McCullie was at such pains to see) proves that his article does not give the representative view. The empty seats he saw at the Tauber performance were not the result of Schnozzle's presence in the programme, or continuous performances, double features, lack of opportunity to "shed the outer world of realities," or a "sense of frustration." No, the explanation is more simple—almost too simple for the sophisticated to appreciate. *The film didn't appeal!*

I myself would like shorter programmes, one feature performances, fixed times, even double prices of admission.

But really! About a month ago many Manchester cinemas changed from twice nightly to continuous programmes. During the last year a hundred or so provincial cinemas have gone from one feature to two. Why these changes? Because the times—and the public—demand them.

Mr. McCullie, wants to "clean up" the cinemas. I'm tired of purges—everywhere. But I don't mind the reformers starting, if they must start, in the studios.

But hasn't a purge started there already? Or is it merely a legal probe?

SIDNEY BERNSTEIN

## Better Balanced Programmes

It seems to me that Mr. McCullie has overlooked one point of vital importance. "Away with the second feature!" would seem to be the slogan of many exhibitors. Very well. Away with it, by all means, but, at the same time, bring on the means for disposing of the production output of the studios, many of them British, which will in consequence be superfluous. True, not all of the "Second Feature" material comes from British studios, neither is it true that all of the films put out by British studios are "Second Feature" standard. If, however, the "Second Feature," or supporting feature, is to be suppressed, what is to become of the films that go to provide it?

Again, the abolition of continuous programmes is advocated. This may seem a step in the right direction to some people, but as a cinemagoer I personally avoid theatres where a "set" hour for the show is in force, preferring instead to avail myself of the facilities afforded by so many other theatres, into which I can drop when a convenient opportunity presents itself.

Fortunately, however, there seems to be no lack of excellent programme material, even among the feature class. The trouble seems to lie mainly in the determination to present, with nearly every good film, a supporting feature.

One hears cinemagoers say to one another, "What's on at the Chromeon this week?" and the answer, "Oh, So-and-So's pretty good in Such-and-Such, but there's a lousy What's-a-name picture with it." And so the enquirer tries to find another cinema with a better-balanced programme.

It is no uncommon thing to hear people grumbling that at a certain theatre there are no shorts in addition to the features. The blindness of exhibitors to the public's love of Mickey Mouse and the Silly Symphonies, coupled with the tendency to substitute for them inferior imitations is amazing. Good documentaries, too, are more popular with the public than the average exhibitor seems to know, or care.

W. F. ELLIOT

# RADIO

## AMERICAN RADIO COMMENTARY

### Edited by Thomas Baird

GILBERT Seldes, noted American writer and front rank critic of the drama, radio, movies and music, has been appointed experimental television programme chief to the Columbia system. With this appointment comes the news that that company is establishing a television centre in New York. So far experiments have been on the laboratory level. Soon they are to be public. The mode of operation outlined by Seldes is intended "to make as many experiments as possible in order to make as many errors as possible in advance."

"The entertainment value of the early programmes," says Seldes, "plus the novelty value, ought to attract widespread attention. As the novelty value decreases, the improvement in the programmes themselves should bring television entertainment up to the current level of other matured forms of entertainment."

The new television centre is situated in the Grand Central Terminal Building. This point of vantage will allow distinguished visitors to New York to be brought before the camera with a minimum of delay. Coaxial cables radiating to key pick-up points throughout the city will assure audiences a wide coverage of events.

William S. Paley, Columbia's president, disclosed in testimony before the Federal Communications Commission, that his company had set aside the sum of £400,000 for carrying out these experiments in television.

* * *

The possibility that the television camera may yet surpass the photographic camera as an instrument for pictorial reproduction has been suggested by Dr. P. C. Goldmark, chief engineer in the above experiments. Dr. Goldmark has just concluded a five-week inspection of television laboratories in Britain, France and Germany.

"Of greatest importance to the future of television programmes," Dr. Goldmark said, "is the progress of engineers in stepping up the light sensitivity of the television camera. Developments now under way in England and Germany as well as in America promise a television camera ten times more sensitive to light than any now in use, thus rendering it even more useful for reproduction than the ordinary photographic camera using modern emulsions."

One obvious advantage of this development, Dr. Goldmark pointed out, would be to reduce the intensity of studio illumination to a point where heat and glare would no longer handicap the performers. It would also make possible a greater depth of focus, which would enable performers to move freely about the stage without becoming blurred on the receiving screen. This in turn would greatly extend the pick-up possibilities of the camera in all situations where special lighting would be impractical.

Concurrently with efforts to make the television camera more light-sensitive, Dr. Goldmark observed that scientists are striving to make it reproduce in their original intensities all colours of the spectrum. The presence of this panchromatic quality in modern photographic emulsions has given them a distinct advantage over the photoelectric surface of the cathode ray tube, which has made necessary a laborious, unnatural make-up for television performances. In England, Dr. Goldmark said, the B.B.C. has already put to practical use a television camera which has been rendered panchromatic "to a fair degree." Ordinary stage make-up suffices for actors performing before it. Used for special events out of doors, the camera requires no special make-up of any kind.

* * *

The high cost of television receivers has handicapped the new art as a popular entertainment medium in England, Dr. Goldmark said. Prices range from £60 to £160. Thus, despite the fact that B.B.C. has broadcast visual programmes for almost a year, less than 3,000 receivers have apparently been sold to home users.

Dr. Goldmark pointed to the fine quality of outdoor pick-ups in England. Transmitters mounted on trucks enable the B.B.C. to televise events taking place within a 20-mile radius of Alexandra Palace. Such pick-ups can be made in any daylight illumination, ranging from bright sunlight to dim haze on a foggy day.

* * *

In France, Dr. Goldmark found television in a more experimental stage than in England. Broadcasts on the old 180-line standard have been abandoned, and the French Government is now preparing to transmit 441-line images over the Eiffel Tower transmitter now under construction.

* * *

At the radio exposition, in Berlin, Dr. Goldmark was able to survey Germany's technical advances in television demonstrations by the country's leading manufacturers. Many home receivers shown employed the projection-type cathode ray tube for producing images comparable in size with the home motion picture screen. One manufacturer displayed a screen 8 feet wide. Standing before it, groups of more than a hundred spectators watched images as sharply defined and as steady, though not quite so brilliant, as the ordinary commercial motion picture.

Public interest in the Berlin display was keen, Dr. Goldmark observed, but by order of the German Post Office, which supervises all television activities in the Reich, no prices were listed. Except for one table top model, which might be manufactured to retail at about £200, the cost of receivers was still too high for mass distribution.

*We, the People*, is a half hour broadcast in which the microphone is turned over to the listeners. The people relate interesting items about themselves or their neighbours in their own fashion. Unusually dramatic stories are dramatised with the individuals taking part as themselves. At least six, and usually more, persons travel to New York weekly to participate. These persons are selected by a committee of listeners from thousands of letters sent in by the radio audience. Among those already heard are college presidents, bootblacks, dance hostesses, clergymen, frontier squatters and Park Avenue socialites.

* * *

The first official foreign radio statement on Japan's policy in the Far Eastern situation was heard in the United States in a talk from Tokyo by Kensuke Horinouche, vice-minister of Foreign Affairs. He spoke on *The Issues in Japan's Clash with China*. Horinouche ranks third in Prince Kenoye's cabinet and is one of Japan's leading statesmen. He spoke in perfect English.

A week later Tadayoshi Hitotsumatsu, a member of the Japanese House of Representatives, spoke to America on *Why Japan and China are in Conflict*. Hitotsumatsu spoke in Japanese with an English translation of his remarks at the end of each paragraph.

Half an hour after Hitotsumatsu, Madame Chiang Kai-Shek, the wife of China's Generalissimo, was to have presented the case for China. Madame Chiang was scheduled to speak from the Chengu short-wave station east of Shanghai, near the strategic Woosung fort. The station was bombed six hours before the broadcast—and Madame Chiang's speech was wired to New York and read there.

News commentators and announcers led by Frank Hedges have been heard in numerous news reports on the situation.

* * *

John L. Lewis and William L. Green, opposing leaders on the U.S. labour battlefront, discussed the labour situation in separate broadcasts last month. Each spoke for half-an-hour. Lewis, who is chairman of the C.I.O. and president of the United Mine Workers of America, stated the case for the C.I.O. and Green, president of the opposing American Federation of Labour, made a plea for the opposite faction.

Unquestionably two of the most powerful personalities in the American labour disturbance, Lewis and Green attracted a nation-wide audience.

* * *

*The Columbia Workshop*, the series of experimental radio dramas which Irving Reis directs for the Columbia network, ventured abroad for the first time when it broadcast Sunday evening programmes from London and Dublin during

# RADIO

## Notes of the Month

### By George Audit

THE B.B.C. say they are going to run an experimental hour in their programmes this coming winter for drama. They propose to broadcast plays which are likely to explore the uses of sound in broadcasting and particularly those which give the human voice a little more work to do than it is accustomed to receive from the stage play.

Plays already named are "The Ascent of F.6" by W. H. Auden and Isherwood, and "The Fall of the City" which was written for American radio by Archibald McLeish. Both of these plays may be described as highly controversial, which would normally put them outside the B.B.C.'s programme material. Fortunately, Mr. Val Gielgud, who is sponsoring the new feature, has forestalled criticism by announcing that the plays are for the "adventurous listener" and are produced for experimental purposes. The scheme is highly commendable and is a definite advance on the Edwardian smugness we have come to associate with the B.B.C. There is also talk of an historical reconstruction on the lines of Herbert Farjeon's "London Calling, 1600," and a production in collaboration with John Grierson.

Feature programme arrangements for the winter also show promise of something new and progressive for radio. Subjects already announced are Marconi, the P. & O. Centenary, Louis de Rougemont, Cecil Sharp, William Blake, Sir Joshua Reynolds, the British Army at Mons, the Russian Revolution, and wine. Listeners will be asking the reason for this sudden recognition of Soviet Russia (hitherto only mentioned with diplomatic news items) and the British Wine Merchants Association will be opening their eyes at the last programme (see their amusing little book, "Not Claret," for a record of correspondence with the B.B.C. about the ban on advertisements of alcoholic beverages in radio publications).

Whenever I have criticised feature programnes for being scrappy or under-rehearsed or superficial, B.B.C. producers have always replied with perfect truth that they have very little time to prepare and rehearse a programme properly and that the pressure of one programme after another makes it extremely difficult to approach the standard of the documentary film. Weeks of preparation and the expenditure of a hundred pounds or so are all burnt out in one brief hour's entertainment, after which the programme is probably dead, seldom recorded, and thousands of broadcasting hours are still waiting to be filled. To the harassed producer the transmitters seem just insatiable.

Now in my opinion the source of this confusion is organisation in the wrong place. The B.B.C. was organised in its present form by ex-Service officers under the leadership of a former factory manager. A battleship certainly requires central organisation. The co-ordination of its sailing and fighting machinery demands strong central control. Any fighting unit is the same. A factory needs central control right down to the smallest unit in the production process if the finished article is to be of any use. But the B.B.C. is an entirely different problem for organisation. Its finances, programme building and transmissions certainly need central operation but what are you going to do about its programmes?

Radio programmes are as diverse as any human activity can be. Variety, music, talks, drama, features, etc., can only be dealt with by specialists of a special kind. Men who know both their subject and the technique of broadcasting it. It is not generally possible for the Governors and Controllers of the B.B.C. to have more than a vague knowledge of these specialities. Under their control the tendency has been for each subject of broadcasting to become the exclusive interest of respective departments. Thus, the Music Department is one world; Drama is another; O.B.s are another. What has happened is that the Control Board (and particularly the Director General) has relied on contact with departmental heads for its "control." The people who make the programmes are isolated.

But within the departments—especially Drama, Features and Talks—the situation is reversed. Ideas are submitted to Directors, are rejected, mangled or accepted, and returned to the assistants to be carried out. Such is the confusion that assistants spend much of their time wandering round soliciting ideas for some impending production. Departments are too big to generate any common enthusiasm. The whole process admittedly "works" well from the control angle, but the output is often appalling.

I believe film experience has shown that such work is best done by small, independent units. Such production units, each in charge of a senior producer, must be given freedom of movement and enough money to spend as they think fit. They must be encouraged to work outside as much, if not more than, inside the B.B.C. I am sure that within a year half-a-dozen such units would revolutionise the quality of radio production, raise new technical standards and help to give the public something it really wants.

* * *

WHAT is the best hoax of the year? Radiolympia has a claim. Under a press barrage heavy enough to sell kosher food to Hitler, the show was heralded as the latest thing in entertainment and glamour. Under the enormous fairy-light slogan "The World is Yours with Radio" you were invited into a modern Prospero's Isle.

Actually, after paying my one-and-sixpence, I found the usual display of plywood sets, failed to get a ticket for the evening variety, and found that *not one of the sets on show could be heard!* Broadcast music there was, but it all came through the Tanoy amplifiers behind the stands.

Radiolympia is really a trade show. The general public hear nothing new. Dealers who understand a chassis and can judge by the appearance of a set are able to make comparisons and to meet their suppliers in comfortable surroundings. At one end of the hall is the Exhibitors' Club, closed to the public. Here, around a garden with fountains playing, are fifty offices laid out like a country club, where dealers and foreign buyers are entertained and orders given. I was told that business has been very brisk this year. Many firms sold their entire stock and got enough advance orders to last them until the next show.

Anybody who wants to hear what radio reproduction can do would be well advised to try the South Kensington Museum for preference. Here is a receiver that makes the noise of Radiolympia sound like a cheap tin trumpet. It gives straight reproduction from about 25 to 12,000 frequencies, which means to say that when you hear an orchestra you hear everything from the scraping of the double-bass strings to the wind in the flute. I am not saying that commercial sets are no use: most of them are remarkably good value to-day.

I am simply wondering why the public were invited to Olympia.

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## *American Radio (contd.)*

September. The programmes were broadcast by short wave from this side of the Atlantic and were not included in any British programmes.

The first production was *Death of a Queen*, an adaptation of Hilaire Belloc's *Marie Antoinette*, which was transmitted to the United States from the B.B.C. studios on Sunday, 12th September, at midnight British time. Val Gielgud, B.B.C. drama chief, was guest director.

* * *

A brilliant roster of world famous artists has again been mobilised for the 1937–1938 season of the *Ford Sunday Evening Hour*. Jose Iturbi will conduct for the first eight weeks and will be followed by Eugene Ormandy. The next director will be Alexander Smallens, who is followed by Fritz Reiner. Iturbi and Ormandy then return for two concerts each. The concluding five weeks will be under the direction of a conductor still to be announced.

The list of guest artists includes Amparo Iturbi, Richard Crookes, Kirsten Flagstad, Lauritz Melchior, Lotte Lehmann, Heifetz, Gladys Swarthout, Lawrence Tibbett, Nino Martini, Menuhin, Elizabeth Rethberg, Nelson Eddy, Lily Pons, and John Charles Thomas. The soloists for five concerts are still to be announced.

# FILM GUIDE

## *Shorts*

**Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves** (Puppet in Gaspar-colour).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Slatinay and George Pal.

| | |
|---|---|
| ABERGELE: Cinema | Oct. 28, 3 days |
| BIGGAR: Cinema | Oct. 28, 1 day |
| BIRMINGHAM: Maypole, Alcester | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| Kingsway, Kingsheath | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| CRIEFF: Cinema | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| EASINGWOLD: Cinema | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| HASLAND: Cinema | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| HOYLAND: Princess | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| HULL: West Park Cinema | Oct. 18, 3 days |
| WHITTINGTON MOOR: Lyceum | Oct. 4, 3 days |

**And So to Work** (Comedy of the early morning).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Richard Massingham

| | |
|---|---|
| BRAMHALL: Tudor | Oct. 4, 3 days |
| GRANTHAM: Picture House | Oct. 4, 3 days |
| OXFORD: Scala | Oct. 7, 3 days |

**Cable Ship** (The G.P.O. Cable Ships at work in the Channel).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
*DIRECTION:* Stuart Legg

| | |
|---|---|
| BARMOUTH: White Cinema | Oct. 28, 3 days |

**Coal Face** (Poetic treatment of coal mining).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit.
*SOUND PRODUCTION:* Alberto Cavalcanti

| | |
|---|---|
| ROMILEY: Savoy | Oct. 9, 1 day |

**Cover to Cover** (Documentary of book production).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Alexander Shaw

| | |
|---|---|
| ARDWICK: Coliseum | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| BLACKPOOL: King Edward | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| Tivoli | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| BROUGHTON: Picturedrome | Oct. 18, 6 days |
| BURNTISLAND: Cinema House | Oct. 11, 2 days |
| BUXTON: Spa | Oct. 11, 6 days |
| CHURCH: Queen's | Oct. 28, 3 days |
| EASINGWOLD: Cinema | Oct. 28, 3 days |
| EYEMOUTH: Picture House | Oct. 8, 2 days |
| GOLCAR: Alhambra | Oct. 4, 3 days |
| HULL: Cleveland | Oct. 11, 3 days |
| KIRKBY STEPHEN: Cinema | Oct. 11, 3 days |
| LONDON: Sphere | Oct. 11, 3 days |
| MACCLESFIELD: Cinema | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| NORTHAMPTON: Ritz | Oct. 11, 3 days |

**Dances of Silesia** (Folk dancing in national costumes).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Cinema Contact

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Tatler | Oct. 25, 7 days |

**Enough to Eat?** (Investigation into mal-nutrition).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Gas, Light & Coke Co.
*DIRECTION:* Edgar Anstey

| | |
|---|---|
| EDINBURGH: Monseigneur | Oct. 18, 3 days |
| LONDON: World News, Praed Street | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| NOTTINGHAM: News House | Oct. 21, 3 days |

**Firefighters** (Documentary of the London Fire Brigade).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Peter Colin

| | |
|---|---|
| NEWTON: Regent | Oct. 11, 3 days |

**Forbidden Frontier** (Political situation between Poland and Lithuania).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* World Window Productions
*SUPERVISION:* Sir Philip Gibbs

| | |
|---|---|
| BIRKENHEAD: Rialto, Bebington | Oct. 25, 3 days |
| CHESTER: Music Hall | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| EDINBURGH: Monseigneur | Oct. 25, 3 days |
| IPSWICH: Picture House | Oct. 18, 6 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Bedford | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Rd. | Oct. 25, 7 days |
| PORTSMOUTH: Victoria | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| WEST KIRBY: Tudor | Oct. 4, 3 days |

**Granton Trawler** (Documentary of deep sea fishing).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* G.P.O. Film Unit
*DIRECTION:* John Grierson

| | |
|---|---|
| ABERGELE: Cinema | Oct. 21, 3 days |

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*La Gare*

Full details from the Manager, Tatler Theatre, Charing Cross Road, W.C.1.

**Heads and Tails** (Greyhound racing).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning

| | |
|---|---|
| CHELSEA: Classic | Oct. 28, 3 days |
| CIRENCESTER: Picture House | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| DARLINGTON: Alhambra | Oct. 18, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Empress | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| Plaza | Oct. 11, 3 days |
| MAIDSTONE: Palace | Oct. 1, 3 days |
| NORTH SHIELDS: Princess | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| SIDCUP: Regal | Oct. 4, 6 days |

**Hollywood To-day** (Behind the scenes in Film City).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Rupert Grayson

| | |
|---|---|
| ALDERSHOT: Alexandra | Oct. 17, 1 day |
| BINGLEY: Hippodrome | Oct. 25, 3 days |
| CREWE: Odeon | Oct. 11, 6 days |
| LANCASTER: Odeon | Oct. 11, 6 days |
| LONDON: World News, Praed Street | Oct. 18, 3 days |
| Grand, Finchley | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| NEWPORT: Odeon | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| NEWTON: Regent | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| PORTSMOUTH: Victoria | Oct. 3, 4 days |
| SHEFFIELD: Crookes Picture Palace | Oct. 25, 3 days |
| WELSHPOOL: Clive | Oct. 11, 3 days |

**Islands of the Bounty** (Islands associated with the famous mutiny).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.

| | |
|---|---|
| BRADFORD: Greengates, Cinema | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| CRIEFF: Cinema | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| EASINGWOLD: Cinema | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| MIDDLETON: Lyric | Oct. 29, 2 days |
| NORTHALLERTON: Central | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| QUEENSBURY: Victoria | Oct. 28, 3 days |
| ROCHDALE: Ceylon | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| Coliseum | Oct. 4, 3 days |
| SEGHILL: Welfare Hall | Oct. 14, 2 days |
| WEST HARTLEPOOL: Regal | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| WREXHAM: Odeon | Oct. 4, 6 days |

**Joie de Vivre** (Cartoon).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*PRODUCTION:* Gross and Hoppin

| | |
|---|---|
| BOURNEMOUTH: Premier News Theatre | Oct. 25, 6 days |
| LEEDS: Armley Rink | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| MILE END: Classic | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| NEWCASTLE: Olympia | Oct. 1, 3 days |
| SOUTHFIELDS: Central Hall | Oct. 16, 1 day |
| SWANSCOMBE: Jubilee | Oct. 21, 3 days |

**Key to Scotland** (Documentary of Edinburgh).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson

| | |
|---|---|
| GRANTHAM: Empire | Oct. 4, 3 days |

**Men Against the Sea** (Documentary of North Sea trawling).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Vernon Sewell

| | |
|---|---|
| CARDIFF: Odeon | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| POYNTON: Cinema | Oct. 11, 3 days |

**Night Mail** (Documentary of the northward trip of the postal special).
*DISTRIBIUTON:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Basil Wright, Harry Watt

| | |
|---|---|
| ABERGELE: Cinema | Oct. 11, 3 days |
| BIRMINGHAM: Kingsway, Kings Hth. | Oct. 18, 3 days |
| COPPULL: Electric | Oct. 18, 3 days |
| FARNSWORTH: Empire | Oct. 20, 4 days |
| HALIFAX: Roxy | Oct. 18, 3 days |
| WHALLEY: Co-op. Cinema | Oct. 11, 3 days |

**Nomad in the North** (Scenic film of Norway).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION & DIRECTION:* C. E. Hodges

| | |
|---|---|
| DORCHESTER: Palace | Oct. 11, 6 days |
| FALKIRK: Pavilion | Oct. 25, 6 days |
| LANCASTER: Grand | Oct. 25, 6 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Corona | Oct. 11, 6 days |
| Magnet | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| LYDNEY: Picture House | Oct. 4, 3 days |
| NEWPORT: Odeon | Oct. 25, 3 days |
| SALTAIRE: Picture House | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| WITHINGTON: Scala | Oct. 7, 3 days |

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# Shorts (contd.)

**Out to Play** (London's children in street and park).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* Harold Lowenstein

| | |
|---|---|
| BOURNEMOUTH: Premier News Theatre | Oct. 18, 6 days |
| ILKLEY: New Theatre | Oct. 18, 3 days |
| MAIDSTONE: Palace | Oct. 3, 6 days |
| MILE END: Classic | Oct. 28, 3 days |
| SWANSCOMBE: Jubilee | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| WINDSOR: Empire | Oct. 7, 3 days |

**Overland Express** (German travelogue).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* C. E. Hodges Productions

| | |
|---|---|
| ALDERSHOT: Alexandra | Oct. 3, 1 day |
| LONDON: World News, Praed St. | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| NOTTINGHAM: News House | Oct. 18, 3 days |
| SWINDON: Palace | Oct. 28, 3 days |

**Plane Sailing** (The ins and outs of gliding).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Bosworth Goldman

| | |
|---|---|
| FARNHAM: County | Oct. 3, 1 day |
| HANLEY: Regent | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| HOLLOWAY: Empire | Oct. 4, 7 days |
| HULL: Carlton | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| LANCASTER: Odeon | Oct. 18, 6 days |
| LEEDS: Assembly Rooms | Oct. 25, 6 days |
| Majestic | Oct. 11, 6 days |
| LONDON: Eros News Th., Piccadilly | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| REDDITCH: Gaumont Palace | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| SOUTHWOLD: Cinema | Oct. 11, 3 days |
| WAKEFIELD: Carlton | Oct. 14, 3 days |

**Secrets of the Stars** (Spotlight on British stages and studios).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Argyle British Productions Ltd.

| | |
|---|---|
| ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE: Majestic | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| BIRKENHEAD: Super | Oct. 11, 3 days |
| CHELTENHAM: Gaumont Palace | Oct. 11, 6 days |
| DARLINGTON: Alhambra | Oct. 4, 3 days |
| GUERNSEY: Lyric | Oct. 25, 6 days |
| HAMILTON: La Scala | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Corona | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| Empress | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| Gaumont Palace | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| Gaumont, Princes Park | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| Tatler | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| LEIGH: Palace | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| MORECAMBE: Tower | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| NEW BRIGHTON: Trocadero | Oct. 28, 3 days |
| NORTH SHIELDS: Princes | Oct. 18, 6 days |
| PRESTON: New Victoria | Oct. 25, 6 days |
| SWINDON: Regent | Oct. 11, 6 days |

**Snow Water** (Water power in the Swiss mountains).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* H. Dreyer

| | |
|---|---|
| BIRKENHEAD: Rialto, Bebington | Oct. 28, 3 days |
| CREWE: Odeon | Oct. 18, 6 days |
| GOOLE: Cinema Palace | Oct. 25, 3 days |
| HULL: National | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| Playhouse | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| LONDON: Electric Palace, Highgate | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| MANCHESTER: Tatler | Oct. 11, 6 days |
| NEWCASTLE ON TYNE: | |
| Majestic, Benwell | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| NEWPORT: Odeon | Oct. 4, 3 days |
| PUDSEY: Picture House | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| SOWERBY BRIDGE: Electric | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| WANSTEAD: Kinema | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| WITHINGTON: Scala | Oct. 11, 3 days |

**Spring Comes to Town** (About Hyde Park).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION & PHOTOGRAPHY:* M. L. Nathan

| | |
|---|---|
| ILKLEY: New | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| MILE END: Classic | Oct. 10, 4 days |
| SWANSCOMBE: Jubilee | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| WINDSOR: Playhouse | Oct. 1, 3 days |

**Statue Parade** (Historical treatment of London statues).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Paul Burnford and Ralph Keene

| | |
|---|---|
| MANCHESTER: Tatler | Oct. 4, 6 days |

**Strange Adventures** (About Africa).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning

| | |
|---|---|
| ALDERSHOT: Alexandra | Oct. 1, 3 days |
| BRIDGETON: Olympia | Oct. 18, 6 days |
| CHICHESTER: Exchange | Oct. 4, 9 days |
| CIRENCESTER: Picture House | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| CLYDEBANK: Bank | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| DUNDEE: Plaza | Oct. 11, 6 days |
| Palace | Oct. 11, 6 days |
| GUERNSEY: Lyric | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| GLASGOW: Kings | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| GLOSSOP: Empire | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| HOUNSLOW: Empire | Oct. 11, 6 days |
| HULL: Rex | Oct. 1, 3 days |
| KINGS LYNN: Majestic | Oct. 1, 3 days |
| LEATHERHEAD: Picture House | Oct. 11, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Corona | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| Bedford | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| Gaumont Palace | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| MONTROSE: Kings | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| PAISLEY: Regal | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| REDDITCH: Gaumont Palace | Oct. 11, 3 days |
| ST. ANDREWS: Picture House | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| STIRLING: Regal | Oct. 28, 3 days |
| UXBRIDGE: Regal | Oct. 25, 6 days |
| WIMBLEDON: Regal | Oct. 25, 6 days |

**They Shall Not Pass** (Documentary of the Civil War in Spain, with English commentary).
*DISTRIBUTION:* International Sound Films
*PRODUCTION:* Ministry of Public Instruction in Madrid

| | |
|---|---|
| NEWBRIDGE: Workmen's Hall | Oct. 4, 3 days |
| TREDEGAR: Workmen's Hall | Oct. 21, 3 days |

**This Other Eden** (A trip down the river Eden, in Westmorland).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph

| | |
|---|---|
| BIRKENHEAD: Super | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| BUXTON: Opera House | Oct. 18, 6 days |
| DARLINGTON: Alhambra | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| EGREMONT: Gaumont Palace | Oct. 25, 6 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Gaumont, Princes Park | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| Plaza | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| Corona | Oct. 11, 6 days |
| Tatler | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| Bedford | Oct. 28, 3 days |
| Casino | Oct. 28, 3 days |
| NORTH SHIELDS: Princes | Oct. 25, 6 days |
| SOUTHAMPTON: Cinenews | Oct. 14, 3 days |

**To-day We Live** (The depressed areas of Wales).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Ralph Bond and R. I. Grierson

| | |
|---|---|
| MANCHESTER: Tatler | Oct. 25, 6 days |

**Top Dogs** (Greyhound racing).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* A. Moncrieff Davidson

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Tatler | Oct. 11, 7 days |

**Under the Water** (Unusual submarine photography).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* Marcel de Hubsch

| | |
|---|---|
| BASINGSTOKE: Plaza | Oct. 17, 4 days |
| CROSBY: Regent | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| LEEDS: Armley Palace | Oct. 11, 3 days |
| LONDON: Classic, Chelsea | Oct. 21, 3 days |
| SUTTON-ON-SEA: Savoy | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| WINDSOR: Empire | Oct. 24, 4 days |

**Wheel and Woe** (The evolution of the motor car).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Liberty
*DIRECTION:* W. G. Duncalf

| | |
|---|---|
| BIRKENHEAD: Super | Oct. 18, 6 days |
| EDINBURGH: New Victoria | Oct. 11, 6 days |
| Picture House | Oct. 11, 6 days |
| EGREMONT: Gaumont Palace | Oct. 18, 6 days |
| HARROGATE: Scala | Oct. 4, 6 days |
| JERSEY: Opera House | Oct. 14, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Tatler | Oct. 7, 3 days |
| Gaumont Palace | Oct. 25, 6 days |
| Empress | Oct. 25, 6 days |
| Gaumont, Princes Park | Oct. 25, 3 days |
| MONMOUTH: Picture House | Oct. 11, 3 days |
| MORECAMBE: Tower | Oct. 10, 4 days |
| PORTSMOUTH: Regent | Oct. 3, 7 days |
| SOUTHPORT: Palladium | Oct. 3, 1 day |
| SOUTHAMPTON: Cinenews | Oct. 17, 4 days |

# Foreign Films

**The Crime of Monsieur Lange** (French)
*DIRECTION:* Jean Renoir
*STARRING:* Jules Berry
René Lefèvre
Slorelle
LONDON: Curzon Following *The Pearls of the Crown*

**L'Equipage** (French)
*PRODUCTION:* Pathé
*DIRECTION:* Anatole Litvak
*STARRING:* Jean Murat
Annabella
LONDON: Studio One Oct. 1, indefinitely

**The Pearls of the Crown** (French)
*DIRECTION:* Sacha Guitry
*STARRING:* Sacha Guitry
Jacqueline Mogan
LONDON: Curzon Oct. 1, indefinitely

**Le Roman d'un Tricheur** (French)
*PRODUCTION:* Cineas
*DIRECTOR & STAR:* Sacha Guitry
LONDON: Academy Oct. 1, indefinitely

**Savoy Hotel 217** (German)
*PRODUCTION:* Ufa
*DIRECTION:* Gustav Ucicky
*STARRING:* Hans Albers
LONDON: Forum Oct. 3, 7 days

**Squadrone Bianco** (Italian)
*PRODUCTION:* Roma Films
*DIRECTION:* Augusto Genina
LONDON: Academy Following
*Le Roman d'un Tricheur*

**La Tendre Ennemi** (Dutch)
*DIRECTION:* Max Ophuls
*STARRING:* Catherine Fonteney
Georges Vitray
Jacqueline Daix
LONDON: Studio One Following *L'Equipage*


## DOCUMENTARY PRODUCERS

**On this page you find listed 32 shorts. It is interesting to note that out of these recordings**

**6 are Foreign**
**8 are British**
**18 are Imperial**

**which, analysed, shows all other British Studios put together recorded 8, Imperial Sound Studios alone recorded 18.**
**Month by month this is our usual average. Imperial Sound Studios are the only recording studios exclusively devoted to the interests of the Documentary Film Producer, and the total number of recordings to date is 950 separate films.**

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WORLD FILM NEWS

AMATEUR AND TECHNICAL SECTION

# What About the Crew's Cruise?

## Hints on the Holiday Cruise Competition Film

*by*

Andrew Buchanan

It is extremely easy to film a holiday cruise, but extremely difficult to film it properly. I have seen a great number of productions, amateur and professional, devoted to holidays afloat, but, with one or two exceptions, they were superficial, lacking in continuity, and conventional. Now, I have always advocated that a film director should endeavour to find out why people do the things they do, and having discovered the reasons, should reveal them, thereby creating a logical basis upon which to construct his picture. Bearing this principle in mind, one immediately realises that a cruising holiday appeals to some people more than others. Sailors and fishermen would be unlikely to choose a cruise, for they see too much of the sea, and would prefer to relax as far inland as possible. On the other hand, it is the people in cities, and far away from the coast, who yearn for distant parts and holidays afloat.

Why not begin, therefore, with one or two people sitting, say, at a window, through which can be seen endless roofs, chimneys, factories and walls. They are studying booklets about cruises, which the camera also scrutinises in close-ups. Alluring pictures of foreign parts fill the screen—palm encircled bays, eastern bazaars, world famous ruins, deserts, linked together with attractive pictures of the great liners which make these places accessible. The faces of the characters gaze longingly at the illustrations, and then stare at the panorama of roofs, which might well be followed by other glimpses of streets, endless rows of houses, and general city life, interspersed with close-ups of contrasting shots of picturesque life abroad.

Is the sun really shining beyond the horizon? Can there be tropical heat anywhere whilst the skies are grey here? That is the reasoning to plant, which creates the urge to set out on a voyage of discovery. One of the booklets is given more concentration than the others, and a finger points to the vessel in the list of sailings, which is decided upon. This shot might merge into another showing hands opening an envelope from which fall bundles of labels and papers.

A section of a suit-case follows, and a label is smacked on to it, which states the name of the liner. Such a shot can cut directly to the name of the liner on the side of the vessel, thus transporting the action to the dockside. Passengers are embarking, and the last of the cargo is being hoisted on board.

Many cruise films begin at sea, but I suggest they ought to begin at the beginning. Hence the docks, and several shots to be taken from the liner looking down at the activities of porters and passengers. The funnel siren shrieks. The liner slowly draws away—the journey has begun.

Now you will have noticed that in films presenting a train journey, or a sea trip, jumps in action are easily covered by shots of the countryside seen through carriage windows, or of the sea swirling past the bow of the boat. Such shots are invaluable, providing they are not introduced too frequently. I mention the point at this stage, because I am about to suggest that the sea, as seen from the stern, sides, and front of the vessel as she travels along, should be shot.

However, such inserts should not permit the director to grow careless about his continuity, so that he shoots anything at any time, knowing he can cover himself with the sea shots. They must be introduced with extreme care. Similarly, the controls on the bridge should be shot in close-ups, at all positions, with the hand of the officer altering the position of the levers. These will be vital when assembling is carried out. Therefore, we have planned to open with a city impression, the decision on a particular cruise, the arrival of labels—dockside scenes, and the departure. We have also agreed to shoot covering sea and bridge shots.

Now activities on board command our attention, and these should certainly not be confined to deck games. On board a liner people seek health, rest, and romance. A survey of the passengers will, therefore, be interesting, especially if the camera is invisible. The director must endeavour to establish various characters who will play their little parts throughout the picture. The very large gentleman wrapped in rugs and sleep, should be shot in varying angles, so that he can be intercut through the film, each glimpse of him, always asleep, introducing a humorous note. The sallow spinster always on the verge of sea sickness, despite placid seas and sunshine. The charming girl who becomes aware of the presence of an interested young man. Close-ups of them casting coy glances at each other. Then, a little later in the film, they are seen sitting together primly. Later, a little less primly. Later still, their arms are entwined, and, very late indeed, their figures silhouetted in a long embrace.

These cameos, cut into the deck games, swirling sea, and shots of the less prominent passengers walking, reading, and eating, will make the film less impersonal.

The production will, of course, be punctuated by the arrival at the various ports of call, and brief camera tours of the unusual scenery. These depend upon the director, time, and general conditions, but they must not be confused with the basis of the film, which is the liner itself—the star of the production.

And that brings us to the final, and most important point of all—the dependence of the cruising holidaymakers on the crew. Night and day men are on duty—the bridge is never left, though rarely thought about by the passengers—the cooks are always busy—and the stokers, firemen, engineers, in the bowels of the boat: what about them, and the great engines which they feed and nurse every minute of the voyage?

Ships engines are a problem to the cameraman, for usually they are in semi-darkness and cannot be lit. Sometimes they are surrounded by sufficient light for shooting, but whether this is so or not, they must be taken, and as an alternative, a scale model that works, in the Science Museum, will have to be shot, whether or not it is of the type in the particular ship in the film, for the engines are vitally important when assembling, and if a model should be resorted to, it can be filmed in such a way that, firstly, it does not look like a model, and secondly, as only the merest flashes are necessary they can be shot so that only gleaming, rhythmic movements are visible. But whichever way the engines are filmed, they should be regularly intercut with the controls on the bridge, the sea flowing past the vessel, and, of course, the cameos of the passengers.

This approach affords a contrast between the cruise of the holidaymakers and the crew's cruise, and brings the human element to life in what otherwise might become a vague impersonal film on any boat, anywhere.

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# FILM LIBRARY

The following films connected with the cocoa and chocolate industry may be borrowed free of charge by schools, clubs and societies, etc.

### 35 mm S.O.F. (flam or non-flam)

**"The Night Watchman's Story"** 6,500 ft. (73 mins.). The cultivation and harvesting of cocoa beans on the Gold Coast; the making of cocoa and chocolate at Bournville.

**"Country Fare"** 1,700 ft. (19 mins.). A documentary film on some aspects of agriculture, such as the production of eggs, milk and barley to meet the growing demand for foods of this kind.

**"Workaday"** 3,500 ft. (39 mins.). The workings of a modern food factory and the provisions made at Bournville for the recreation of employees.

**"The Gold Coast"** 1,800 ft. (20 mins.). Native life and industries on the Gold Coast of British West Africa.

**"Fascinating Facts"** 750 ft. (8 mins.). A "believe-it-not" film of facts and statistics about the Factory in a Garden.

### 16 mm S.O.F. (S.M.P.E.)

**"The Night Watchman's Story"** 4 reels (45 mins.). A shortened version of the 35 mm. film described above.

**"Workaday"** 3 reels (30 mins.) see description above.

**"The Gold Coast"** 2 reels (20 mins.) see description above.

**"Fascinating Facts"** 1 reel (9 mins.) see description above.

### 16 mm SILENT

**"The Night Watchman's Story"** 4 reels (45 mins.).

**"Country Fare"** 2 reels (20 mins.).

**"Workaday"** 3 reels (30 mins.) (in preparation).

**"The Cocoa Bean"** 1 reel (9 mins.).

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## The Educational Films Bureau

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# FILM FEDERATION RE-BORN

**by J. S. Fairfax-Jones**

WHEN, after the successful launching of the first film society in London in 1925, the movement began to take root in the provinces, it was soon realised that a Federal Organisation was needed. By 1932 film societies had been established or were in the course of formation at Billingham, Birmingham, Cambridge, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Ipswich, Liecester, Manchester, Oxford, and Southampton.

Those engaged in the formation of the earliest provincial film societies naturally turned to the parent society in London for information and advice. One of the objects of the London Society was to encourage and assist the formation of film societies in other parts of the country. To Miss Harvey, the then secretary of the London Society, many secretaries of the first provincial societies, myself among them, owe the successful inauguration and continuance of their societies.

But it became evident that the sheer labour of advising nearly a dozen societies, and in many cases booking their programmes for them, was too great a strain on the resources of the London Society—in terms of time at any rate. Accordingly, in the summer of 1932, a conference at which the societies then formed were represented, was held at Welwyn. From this conference emerged "The Federation of British Film Societies" with the following objects:

> "To collect information for mutual assistance and for the advice of new film societies; to organise representation to authority of the needs of film societies, and to organise the collective booking of films."

For some inexplicable reason, the Federation as so constituted was never a great success. Among the reasons which might perhaps be assigned to this were the independence of some of the older and more experienced societies, the varying needs of the societies, the difficulty of welding the essentially scattered nature of the membership into a cohesive and unanimous whole, and the resignation of Miss Harvey from the secretaryship.

The absurdity of the position became so patent to everybody that in April, 1936, a further conference was held at Leicester and was attended by some 40 delegates. The conference was purely for discussion and it proved to be extremely valuable and enlightening. It was, however, in effect a fiasco, for, on the second day, after many of the delegates had left to attend the London Society's performance, the remaining delegates passed a number of resolutions with apparent intent to bind the Federation as a whole.

At this point the Scottish societies broke away from the Federation and have remained independent ever since.

The Interim Executive Committee set out to draw up a constitution which was adopted at a meeting held in June, 1937. And so the new British Federation of Film Societies with Miss Barbara Frey as secretary came into being.

So, out of all this past turmoil and uncertainty has emerged a new, a practical and a voluntarily constituted Federation. Long may it flourish!

# "FILM MAKING from SCRIPT to SCREEN"

## *reviewed for Amateurs by Evelyn Spice*

HERE at long last is a book* for amateur film makers, which goes beyond technical details, how to light sets, etc., and strikes at the basic problem which confronts all film makers to-day, namely, along what lines should he make his film, what is his subject to be? Is he to make fiction films, or go into the documentary field? How can he help the film to find its true self, to do to the best of its powers all those things which no other medium can tackle?

The amateur director, says Mr. Buchanan, is independent. He is not tied by box-office requirements. He does not need to content himself with being only a film manufacturer, making films along cut and dried lines, in imitation of old stage practices, or fiction successes.

He stresses the need to make films "on paper before tackling actual production, and it is upon paper that the future will be gradually formulated, regardless of one's status in professional or amateur cricles. . . . let us first find the formula and the future will look after itself, rather than talk of Progress, as we do, with the formula undiscovered."

Mr. Buchanan goes farther. He not only suggests the need for a plan, or formula, but presents a starting off point. He urges amateurs to:

> ". . . . follow in the wake of the progressive documentalists, realising their limitations from a fictional point of view, and endow their principles with human drama and comedy. Frame the story you are longing to produce in realistic settings, and prepare to meet the criticism of those who can think of no way in which to produce pictures save within a studio.
>
> "When the existing gulf between documentary and fictional has been fully realised, and bridged by the plans of the imaginative director, the result, the fictional-documentary film, will achieve universal recognition."

Britain, on the one hand, he says, has few equals in documentary production, while on the other, she has failed to produce financially successful fictional features. The solution obviously lies in developing the work at which we excel. "The amateur", he says, "can get about the job without any interference from anyone. Wherever he lives, the location can be truly portrayed, framing whatever story he wishes to tell."

He warns amateurs:

> "Do not attempt a Chinese melodrama, a Spanish revolution, or a history of Harlem, but keep the story to normal happenings, which will give opportunities to reveal the world around you . . . the director who has trained himself to be an observant documentalist capable of creating exciting non-fictional films out of the material surrounding him, should not change his method of approach one iota when handling fiction. He should set his tale in the village, the town, or the factory, and portray his location with the same vividness as he would if making a purely interest reel."

By doing this, he believes, the amateur will be doing for Britain something which the professional film maker has not yet seen his way to do. In brief, to put Britain on the map. To make films which are original British productions, about British people, against British background.

> "Commercial and climatic reasons are largely responsible for all films conforming, more or less, to the same studio methods," he says, "but the group which breaks away from all that kind of thing is bound to win success, just as Britain would have done, had she not imitated, in detail, the production methods of Hollywood, which have resulted in films being produced in Britain, as distinct from British films, that are but pale replicas of American productions."

Mr. Buchanan treats his whole subject from the creative, rather than the technical side. He outlines, in his first chapters, the whole process of film making, from the growth of the film idea, scripting, camera work, editing, through to the finished film. When talking about the use of the camera he is thinking in terms of the finished picture, and urges the camera-director, or director to regard his camera as his "mechanical self, to be governed by his brain and his ability as a creative artist. . . ." So with cutting, etc., he urges the responsibility of the director to carry the idea of theme of his film in his mind all the time, and forego all things which detract from the central theme.

Having theorised, Mr. Buchanan gives examples, in chapters, which are reprints of articles used in *World Film News*, and *Amateur Cine World*, about filming a town, a village, a factory, a farm, etc. (They are not, however, examples of his fictional-documentary film plan).

Every amateur should have Mr. Buchanan's book. He will learn much that will be of great value to him, and will surely not fail to be impressed by the sincerity of the author in his frank presentation of the film as it is to-day, what it might be in the future, and the contribution the amateur might make to that future.

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# WHY REVERSAL FILM

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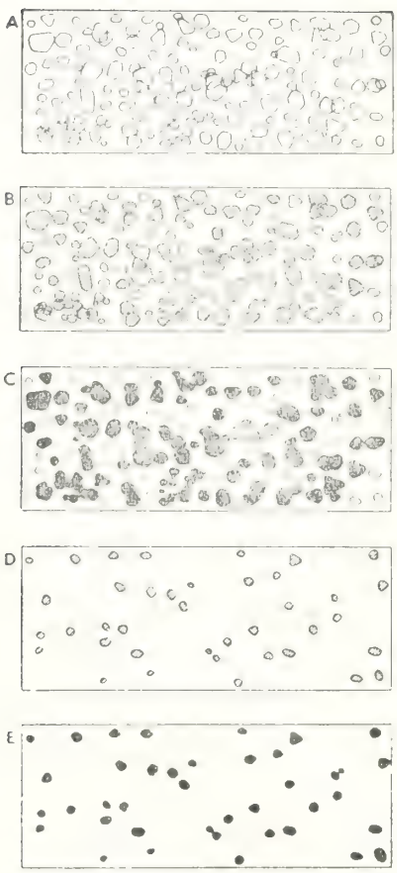


A. *Diagram showing the unexposed grains of silver bromide in the film*

B. *The largest and most sensitive grains are exposed in the camera.*

C. *The exposed grains are developed to form a negative image.*

D. *The developed grains are removed by a bleaching bath which dissolves silver, leaving the undeveloped grains, which are now exposed.*

E. *These grains are now developed, forming a positive image*

**One big advantage of reversal film is absence of graininess in the positive image. The extreme fineness of grain is a direct result of the *reversal process.***

The following description of the reversal process is given in "Photography" by Dr. C. E. K. Mees, Director of Kodak Research.

"In the *reversal process,* the exposed image is developed, and then the developed silver is dissolved in a *bleaching* bath, which oxidises the silver. This leaves behind the undeveloped silver bromide, which was not affected by the developer because it was not exposed to light. After a fresh exposure to light, this remaining silver bromide is developed in its turn and gives a positive. This is illustrated in the figure, which is a drawing made from pictures taken through the microscope. In Section A, we see the grains of the light-sensitive silver bromide in the emulsion, and in Section B there are marked, by cross-hatching, those which have been affected by light during exposure in the camera. They would not show any change to the eye, of course, because the change by light is not visible. These grains form the latent image. After development, these exposed grains turn into black metallic silver, and this is shown in Section C of the diagram. Then the bleaching bath removes all the silver and leaves behind the silver bromide grains which were not exposed, as shown in Section D. These are re-exposed and developed and make the final positive, as we see in Section E."

. . . .

"The graininess of ordinary negatives is due to the large clumps of silver bromide grains present in the emulsion. These large clumps are more sensitive to light than small clumps or widely separated grains, and, therefore, when a short exposure is given, the large clumps are the first to become exposed. These are removed in the reversal process, and the final image is made up of the grains of the least sensitivity. Since these are the smallest grains and the smallest clumps of grains, *such a direct positive image shows very little graininess.*"

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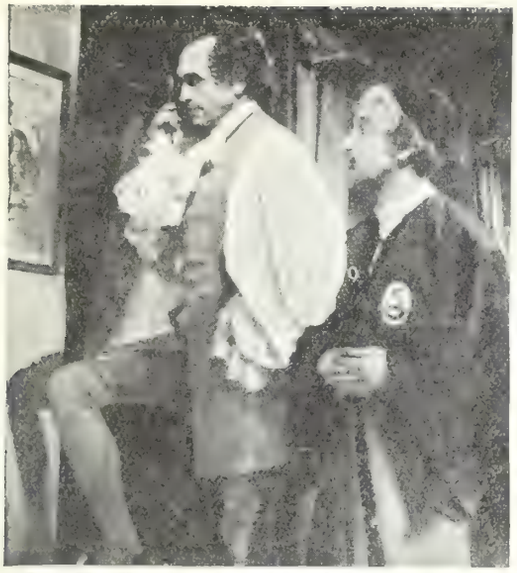

*"Jew Suss"—distributed by Gebescope*

FOR the benefit of students *W.F.N.* has made this month a preliminary examination of the sources of interesting films in this country, and listed a mixed collection as a stimulus to detailed examination of the film catalogues of the sub-standard and specialist libraries.

The investigation reveals at the outset a very healthy collection of films worth studying from historical, technical and other points of view. It shows, for example, that among the cartoons there is some of the early work of Walt Disney and Max Fleischer available in this country. There is also a fair collection of those early classics mentioned in every reference book on the history of film, for example: *The Covered Wagon*, *Vaudeville*, *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari;* a number of important continental films including *Dr. Mabuse*, *The Blue Light* and Starewitch puppet films, and a very good collection of the best Russian films such as *Mother*, *Potemkin*, *Turksib* and *The General Line*.

American comedies and westerns are well represented, among them a great many short Chaplin films, a few Harold Lloyds, Harry Langdons and Laurel and Hardys.

The lists of British films include Hitchcock's *Blackmail* and *The Lodger*, and a number of more recent works such as *Rome Express*, *Friday the 13th*, *Jew Suss* and *Man of Aran*. Technical and documentary films are featured and the lists of Gebescope enter the Face of Britain series, Paul Rotha's *Shipyard* and the technical films *How Talkies Talk* and *Cathode Ray Oscillograph*.

An interesting find for the student of diagrammatic work is the existence of some Marcel de Hubsch three-minute films re-edited in silent form. There are also English versions of the two Swedish films *Gentlemen in Top Hats and Gentlemen in Crowns* and *Igloo*. The former is a survey of the political lay-out of Europe before and after the Great War.

Necessarily most of the films listed here are silent; all of them are not available on a range of projector sizes. Additional information is of course available on the original catalogues which to the discerning will probably provide a great deal more interest than the appended selection.

It is hoped to add to the data collected here and publish from time to time additions to the list.

**Butcher's Film Service,** 175 Wardour Street, W.1.
*The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (Fritz Lang).
*War is Hell.*
*L'Ordonnance.*
*The Mascot* (Starewitch).
*The Ringmaster* (Starewitch).

**Kodascope,** Kodak Ltd., Kingsway, W.C.2. **(8 mm.)**
*Grass* (Meriam C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack).
*Fish from Hell.*
*Anchors Aweigh.*
Charlie Chaplin shorts.
Harold Lloyd short comedies.
*With Love and Hisses* (Laurel and Hardy).
*Knock Out Buster* (Buster Brown).
*Feet of Mud* (Harry Langdon).
*Saturday Afternoon* (Harry Langdon).
*The Saw Mill* (Larry Semon).
*We're in the Navy Now* (Wallace Beery).
Oswald the Rabbit Series (Walt Disney).
Out of the Inkwell Series (Max Fleischer).
Felix Series (Pat Sullivan).
*The Pony Express* (Ricardo Cortez).
*The Covered Wagon* (James Cruze).
*The Lost World.*
Various Westerns.

**Kodascope, 16 mm.**
Our Gang comedies.
Chaplin shorts.
Harold Lloyd comedies.
Laurel and Hardy comedies.
Harry Langdon comedies.
Will Rogers Westerns.
Mack Sennett comedies.
Early comedies with Reginald Denny, Edward Everett Horton, George Sidney and Charles Murray.
*Behind the Front* (Wallace Beery and Raymond Hatton).
*We're in the Navy Now.*
*Hands Up* (Raymond Griffith).
Felix, Out-of-the-Inkwell and Oswald the Rabbit cartoons.
*Livingstone.*
*Blackmail.*
*Piccadilly.*
*The Ring.*
*The Lodger.*
*The Informer* (Lya da Putti).
*Guns of Loos.*
*The Americano* (Douglas Fairbanks).
*The Lost World.*
*Hell's Heroes.*
*The Covered Wagon.*
*The Pony Express.*

**Educational and General Services,** 37 Golden Square, W.1. **(16 mm. silent).**
*Gentlemen in Top Hats and Gentlemen in Crowns.*
*Arabia and Islam* (Atlantic Films 3-minute short).
*A Journey Round the Moon* (Atlantic Films 3-minute short).
*The Solar System.*
*Igloo.*
*David Livingstone.*

**Gebescope,** Film House, Wardour Street, W.1.
*Rome Express.*
*Friday the 13th.*
*The Good Companions.*
*I Was a Spy.*
*The Constant Nymph.*
*Man of Aran* (Flaherty).
*The Lodger* (Hitchcock).
*Jew Suss.*
*The Man Who Knew Too Much.*
*Emil and the Detectives.*
*The Clairvoyant.*
*The Thirty-nine Steps.*
*Devil Dancers of Sikkim.*
*How Talkies Talk.*
*Cathode Ray Oscillograph.*
*Shipyard* (Paul Rotha).
The Face of Britain Series.
Secrets of Life Series.

**International Sound Films,** 1 Millman Street, W.C.1.
*The Road to Life* (Nikolai Ekk—Russian).
*War is Hell.*
*Enough to Eat* (English short film).
*Housing Problems* (English short film).

**Kino Films,** 84 Gray's Road, W.C.1.
*Battleship Potemkin* (Eisenstein).
*The Ghost That Never Returns* (Alexander Room).
*The General Line* (Eisenstein).
*The End of St. Petersburg* (Pudovkin).
*Mother.*
*Turksib* (Victor Turin).
*Hell Unlimited.*
*Storm Over Asia* (Pudovkin).
*Ten Days That Shook the World* (Eisenstein).
*War is Hell* (Victor Trivas).

**Kinograph Distributors,** 191 Wardour Street.
*Gentlemen in Top Hats and Gentlemen in Crowns.*
Various British documentaries.

**Pathescope,** 10 Gt. Marlborough Street, W.1. **(9.5 mm.)**
*The Lion of the Moguls* (Ivan Mosjoukine).
*Vaudeville* (Emil Jannings, directed by Dupont).
*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene).
*Faust* (Emil Jannings).
*Metropolis* (Brigitte Helm).
*The Count of Monte Cristo.*
*Les Miserables.*
*Blackmail* (Alfred Hitchcock).
*The Ring* (Alfred Hitchcock).
*Piccadilly* (Dupont).
*The Informer* (Lars Hansen and Lya da Putti).
*White Hell of Pitz Palu* (Pabst).
*Q Ships.*
*Orphans of the Storm* (D. W. Griffith).
*Lorna Doone* (John Loder and Victoria Hopper).
Various early Disneys.
Various early Harold Lloyd comedies.
Various early Chaplins including: *The Water Cure* and *Easy Street.*
Various Our Gang comedies.

**M.A.G.**

# Technical Tit-Bits

by DAVID MYERS

"J.T." of Liverpool, asks:

"How can I determine the necessary size of a cinema screen for a hall with certain measurements?"

The size of the screen to accommodate the rear seats should have a width equal to one-sixth of the distance from those seats to the screen. Therefore if the distance is 72 feet a screen with a width of 12 feet would be necessary.

The distance from the screen to the front row of seats should be at least 1.5 times the screen's width, and not more than 45 degrees from the line of sight to the top of the screen.

Excessive magnification is objectional as this brings out the imperfections of the emulsion and film base grain, and is unnatural.

Distortion is caused by any one of the following, or may be combined: the projection angle, the viewing angle, or the discrepancy between the camera point of view and that of the audiences.

The angle of projection is, however, the most pronounced, due to the fact that often for no other reason than one of architectural vanity, the projection room (the heart of every cinema) is pushed up as far as possible into the roof, therefore projecting down to the screen at an acute angle. When pictures are projected at steep angles the bottom of the image is magnified more than the top, the result being a "keystone" effect, the lines becoming convergent upwards instead of being vertical.

Correction is commonly effected by tilting the screen to the desired angle to meet the projected rays, or by masking over the broadest part of the picture with black drape so as to square the picture.

A rectangular shape can, however, be maintained, irrespective of projection angle, by having special aperture plates cut, these being distorted in shape sufficiently to allow for correction when the rays meet the screen.

This practice was actually adopted at the Plaza Theatre, Piccadilly, London, some years ago, where the picture was projected on a steep angle to a perfectly straight screen without any distortion.

It may be said that this method must produce an out of focus effect, and whilst this *is* right, the spread over on a large area of screen is hardly noticeable, and in fact this would appear to be the best means.

Distortion, of course, depends upon the position from which the screen is viewed, but the general aim is to provide the maximum number of seats in the higher priced region with the best picture; all cannot be served alike in the modern super cinema, unless the place is long and narrow and without balconies.

Cinema projection is an art, and as such, should not be a mere operation by numbers. True, when the motor is switched on, and the volume control is turned up, the show commences, but that is not all.

Each subject should be treated according to its particular merits: practically all films require the backing of the human element to "put them over." The sound has to be carefully nursed, it can be increased to crescendo to heighten the effect of an oncoming train, or, the foreseen climax to a comical situation can be saved by raising the volume so that the final sentence can be heard above the roar of laughter. One learns to anticipate the reactions of an audience, one can evoke spontaneous effect by the manipulation of the controls at the psychological moment—too late or too soon, and the effort is spoilt.

It must be remembered that the recording engineers are not able to anticipate the volume of laughter that certain situations are likely to create, or of the noises in the theatre that may drown that pathetic sob that means so much.

I have in mind the great success that attended my own efforts a few years back, when, with a simple two-reeler featuring Louis Simon and George Lemaire in *The Dentists*, the effects were so much heightened by the sound effects, that the film was rebooked on three subsequent occasions. The climax in this instance centred around the extraction of teeth, when the groans of the patient were over-amplified as likewise were the extracted teeth being dropped into the basin with a loud PLICK, which just caused riots of prolonged laughter.

Yes, one can play on the emotions of a cinema audience by the careful handling of sound alone, but one has to anticipate, and to work slightly, ever so slightly, *ahead* of the audience reactions. This is what is commonly termed "showmanship."

A reader asks, "Where can I obtain a technical course on talking picture engineering?"

I would suggest the course be taken through the British Institute of Engineering Technology of 17 to 19 Stratford Place, London, W.1.

The course, including all text books, lessons, unlimited tuition, instruments, instructions, guarantee and award of final examination diploma, is £11, or £12 10s. by equal instalments. The course covers practical mathematics, optics, acoustics, magnetism and electricity, alternating and direct current circuits, amplifier design and theory, principles of rectification, impedance matching, photo-cell and "pick-up" equipment, sound recording, sound picture photography, sound reproducing systems, operation and maintenance of reproducing systems, troubles and their causes and clearance, etc., etc.

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* * *

In answer to a general question raised—16 mm. cameras of good quality can be purchased from £20 upwards, and a really good silent projector for use with Film Societies can be purchased from £50 upwards. Write to David Myers about it, and he will settle your problems in the stamped addressed envelope which you must enclose.

* * *

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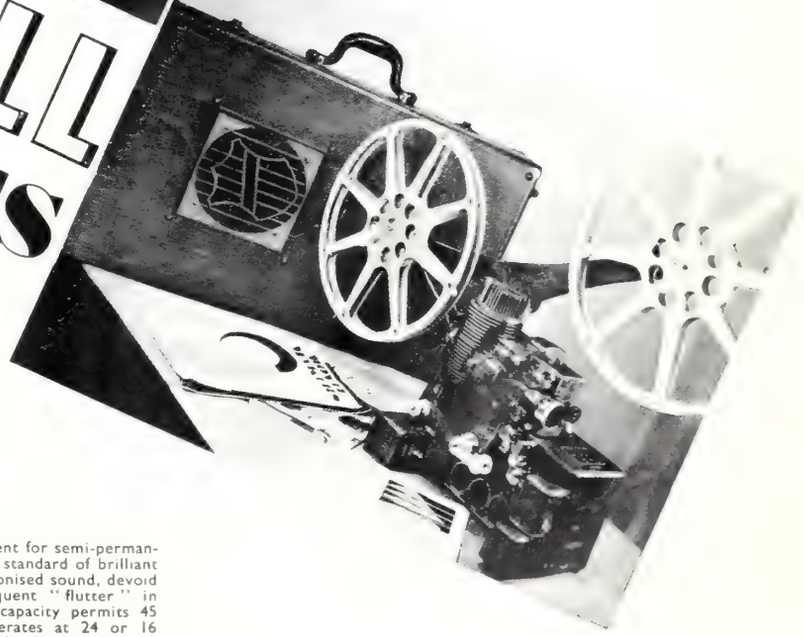

And, of course, it is not restricted to science—Drama, sport, comedy, travel, singers, men of letters, the variety is immense—and their application to schools, institutes, churches, homes, etc., for entertainment or instruction is as varied. The name Bell & Howell is a guarantee of perfect performance—the experience of this firm is the history of the motion picture. Since the very beginning, way back in 1907, this firm was supplying the apparatus which reared the film baby to its present lusty maturity, and is still supplying over 90 per cent of the giant film corporations today.

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# world FILM news

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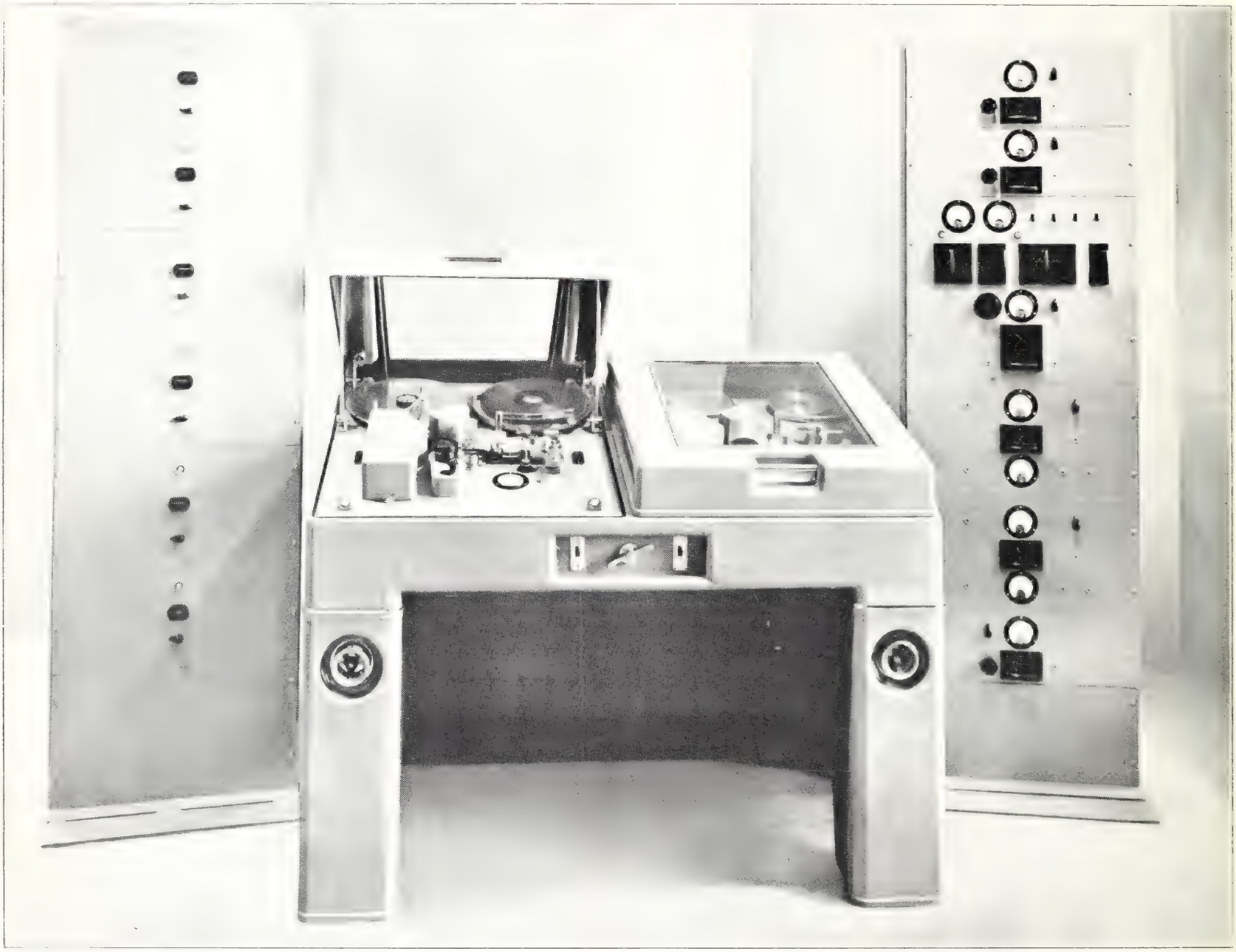

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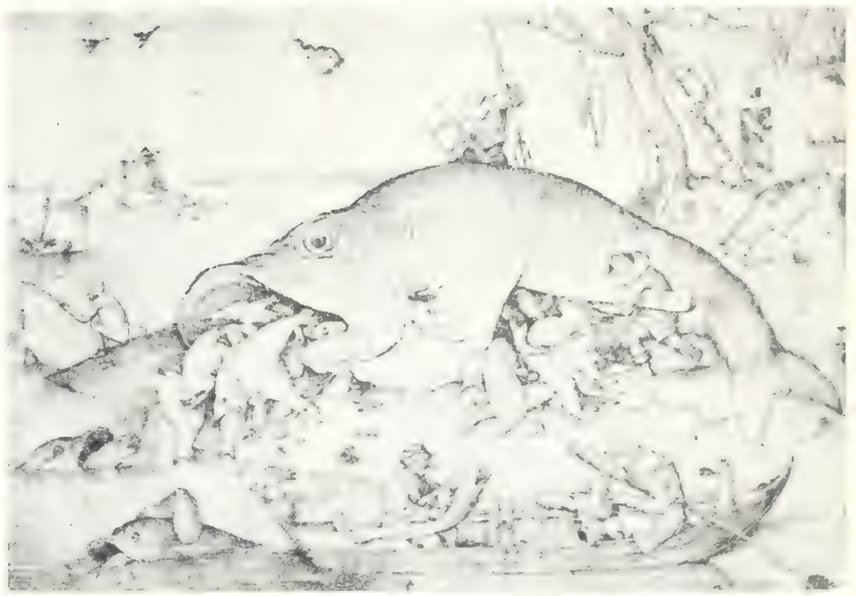

*Drawing by Breugel*

## *The position of the British Independent Exhibitor analysed for World Film News by* THE FILM COUNCIL

A COMPARISON of the number of circuits with the cinemas under their control, as listed in the *Kinematograph Yearbooks* for 1936 and 1937 respectively, produces the following picture of cinema control at the end of 1935 and a year later:

| Size of Circuit | No. of Circuits | | Total No. of Halls | | Net Increase of Halls approx. 12 months 1936 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1935 | 1936 | 1935 | 1936 | |
| 2-9 halls | 128 | 138 | 615 | 824 | 209 |
| 10-19 ,, | 22 | 27 | 288 | 333 | 45 |
| 20-49 ,, | 4 | 5 | 130 | 151 | 21 |
| 50-99 ,, | 1 | 2 | 53 | 106 | 53 |
| 100-199 ,, | 2 | 2 | 242 | 320 | 78 |
| 200 or over | 2 | 2 | 559 | 601 | 42 |
| Total Circuits | 159 | 176 | 1,887 | 2,335 | 448 |

The total number of cinemas at the beginning of 1936 was estimated at 4,400, that of cinemas operating at the present time is about 5,000. If the considerable number added in the last eight months is taken into account, it will be seen that by far the greater part of the increase in British cinemas since the end of 1935 was due to circuit houses (defining a circuit as a group of two or more cinemas under single control). Yet, apart from the circuits controlling from 50 to 99 halls which doubled their holdings in 1936 the largest proportionate increase in cinema ownership took place in the group controlling between two and nine houses.

As against this fact it must, however, be remembered that the table only gives a partial picture of the power of the largest combines, for particularly during recent months most of them have acquired direct or indirect control over many of the smaller and medium sized groups and financial participation or joint management arrangements have increased their actual predominance to a much greater degree, than is revealed by our figures. Nevertheless, it is still true to state that about half the cinemas in this country are independently controlled single halls, and, if the lowest group of the circuits controlling less than 10 halls is added, we find that the "independent" exhibitors even to-day control well over 3,000 out of the 5,000 cinemas in Great Britain.

THE central problem determining the economic welfare of an exhibitor, whether circuit or independent, is his competitive strength in the film hire wrangle. Film hire, however, is not merely a matter of price, it is even more perhaps a matter of film quality, the power, that is to say, of the exhibitor to resist the renter's attempt to dump a large number of inferior films on him with every good picture he hires, and it is finally a matter of the exhibitor's ability to bargain for first, second or subsequent showings. The exhibitor's bargaining power depends, first, on the aggregate number of patrons he can attract to his hall or halls. It depends, that is to say, on the total seating capacity at his disposal and on its attractiveness for his customers; the elaborateness and comfort of his halls, their admission price range, their location, and the amount of competition in his locality.

It is here that the circuit scores over the independent, even if the latter's cinema is a large and up-to-date one. For the aggregate admissions and, therefore, returns of a large number of cinemas necessarily greatly exceed the total hire revenue that can be obtained from even the most capacious single hall. Most of the issues that fill the columns of the trade press with violent controversies hinge on this problem: the "super cinema" and the "super programme" booking bars and the illegal, though nevertheless universal, practice of block booking, "redundancy" due to overbuilding and the independents' struggle to resist the squeezing-out methods of the circuits. Viewed in this light, the figures in our table revealing the striking growth of the smallest circuit group assume a considerable degree of significance. To compete with the booking strength of the circuits the independents are to-day themselves compelled to adopt the policy of circuit building. The case of a provincial city, like York, is instructive. Until recently the cinema accommodation in York was confined to a very large and up-to-date independent hall and to three other houses controlled by one of the major circuits, but unable to destroy the superior attractiveness of their rival. A short while ago, however, two other circuits have built modern super halls in the town, and, despite his long-standing reputation, the independent is now forced to build a second hall in an attempt to maintain his bargaining ability.

But in the face of such large groups determined on extending their power by a frantic policy of building and acquisition the hope of the independents to maintain their position is obviously a slender one. And their actual position must be judged not only by a quantitative standard, but rather by the extent to which they are still able to command "first-run" situations. In London the circuits already have complete control, for all practical purposes, of the important first-run halls. In the provinces this state of affairs has not yet been attained, but is speedily and irresistibly approaching. For in the face of this threat the independents themselves are disunited. Only in one or two towns have they shown the degree of solidarity necessary to resist the encroachments of the circuits with their superior bargaining power. And all efforts to secure a large scale booking ring on the part of exhibitors, not actually under single control, have hitherto been successfully resisted by the renters. The difficulties of uniting the forces of the independents are greatly increased by the fact that to a large extent the actual owners of their halls are not the original pioneer exhibitors themselves,

but shareholders recruited from all classes of local tradesmen, or local builders, whose interests are mainly absorbed by their own trade problems and not by their cinema holdings which are for them only a sideline. To these groups have now been added the interests of financial institutions in the city, whose attention has largely been directed to the hitherto suspect sphere of the cinema by local accountants or surveyors. For it is necessary to distinguish three main waves in the great expansion of British cinemas which has taken place since the introduction of the talkies.

THE first of these waves was due to the boom conditions caused by that more attractive and novel kind of entertainment. It expressed itself in the main in large-scale new building or modernisation schemes initiated by the independents. To finance these schemes they enlisted the support of local capital advanced by people of their own special standing: the local butcher, baker, candlestick maker. The success of this speculative drive then aroused the circuits, many of whose halls were but sorry old shacks compared with the new supercinemas built by the independents. The second wave thus commenced with a determined buying campaign on the part of the circuits, who acquired many of the new halls of the independents. The third wave is characterised by the building drive of the circuits, but also by a considerable amount of speculative building on the part of former "independents." This latter class to a large extent never intend to run the cinema, thus built, on their own account.

Fortunate in having acquired a valuable site, before the competitive bidding of the circuits for sites was in full swing, these people run up a luxurious structure with the support or even under the control of the building contractor and/or various city interests. And they hope to recoup their investment by selling the completed cinema to one or other of the circuits. The incursion into the trade of these extraneous interests, not primarily concerned with the actual business of cinema operation, naturally has had a depressing effect on the economic position of the genuine small exhibitors, dependent, as they are, on a high rate of profit, if they are to make a living.

## EXHIBITORS VERSUS RENTERS

GOLD-RUSH conditions during the early talkie boom enabled the renters to push up the terms of film hire to a hitherto unheard-of extent. Whereas in the silent days one of the largest circuits spent on the average about 25 per cent of its admission revenue on film hire, the renters were able to obtain about 40 per cent from the exhibitors as a whole in the early talkie days. This rate could not be maintained as an average rate, when boom conditions ceased to exist and the novelty of talkies wore off, and when the number of cinemas was increased by one fourth. Nevertheless, by playing up the circuits against the independents and one circuit against the other, the renters were able to maintain average rentals at what, for the exhibitors, is the now all-but-uneconomic rate of 35-40 per cent (one circuit is even known to pay 45 per cent of its revenue on film hire). They obtain this rate by enforcing as much as 50 per cent for the hire of their best films and compelling the exhibitors to take as many of their duds as possible at a flat rate or at the highest percentage they can squeeze out of them. Film rentals at such levels are ruinous for the independents, forced, as they are, into the less remunerative second or third run positions, for the change from a first to a second run position by no means implies a reduction in the relative burden of film hire for the exhibitor. He is, on the contrary, to an even greater extent than before at the mercy of the renter, since the latter has already collected the major portion of his expected revenue from the first-run circuit halls and is thus able to drive the hardest possible bargains for second and subsequent release rights.

What characterises the present situation, however, is not only the slow, lingering, death of the independents, it is above all the fact that to-day the lot of the circuits themselves is but little rosier than that of the small men they are squeezing to the wall.

It is quite true, of course, that in the long run the antiquated "flea-pit" or even the independent "super" cinema has not the slightest chance of surviving against the competition of not one, but several, powerful circuit houses. But curiously enough the small fry have more than their full share of that bulldog toughness so greatly admired in this country. With their backs to the wall, they display an awkward persistence in prolonging the agony. This excellent illustration of what professional economists glibly call "friction" naturally has the irritating result of delaying the "normal" tempo of realisation on the vast investments sunk in the rapidly expanding circuits. For with the increase in scale and luxurious appointments the circuit "super" with its 3,000 seats requires a very much larger patronage, than was hitherto forthcoming in the district. And although it may succeed in attracting an average attendance greatly in excess of the patronage formerly given to the older halls, the miserable few hundred patrons, still faithful to the latter would if they could be induced to visit the new supercinema, make all the difference required to fill the margin between loss and profitability.

BUT this is not the whole story, as far as the circuits are concerned. We have so far intentionally neglected the second and equally important factor determining the exhibitor's bargaining power in his dealings with the renter. That factor is the presence or absence of alternative sources of supply. More than 60 per cent of the films (American and British) shown in this country were, until recently, distributed by the renting subsidiaries of the eight major American production concerns. Nevertheless the two main British circuits, at least, were still in a relatively favourable bargaining position, owing to the fact that they themselves were allied to important British production units.

The collapse of the British production boom early this year has, however, greatly weakened even their power to resist the pressure of the American renters. For the cessation of Gaumont-British production and the definite turn to a conservative production policy on the part of Mr. Maxwell has resulted in a marked reduction in the supply of first class films. Added to this is the fact that the major portion of what remains of British production—that of Mr. Korda's enterprises—is already associated with an American renting concern, and the further, even more serious, fact that the American renters are penetrating to an ever-increasing extent into the British exhibition sphere. For the two major circuits to-day no longer stand alone in their former position of absolute predominance. Other circuits are growing rapidly, and the two next in size are already definitely associated, financially or otherwise, with American renters. (To unravel, at this stage, the Anglo-American links of the Gaumont and A.B.C. circuits themselves would, we fear, be beyond the ingenuity even of Messrs. Ostrer and Maxwell). In such a situation the existing level of film hire costs, which is largely due to the ruthless manner in which the circuits sacrificed the interests of the independents during the recent phase of rapid expansion, must necessarily present a grave menace to the economic security of even the largest cinema concerns.

## AMERICANS TIGHTEN SCREW

THE American renters are fully aware that there are limits to which they can squeeze the orange. And they are also aware of the fact that these limits have all but been reached to-day. Nevertheless they are still attempting to tighten the screw. They are, in the first place, reducing the number of exclusive first-run contracts on major films, forcing even large exhibitors to accept simultaneous release dates ("concurrent runs") without a proportionate reduction of hire charges. In this way they are increasing the number of first class returns for each picture. Secondly they are carefully putting out feelers to explore the possibility of a general increase in cinema admission charges: in their contracts for certain "scoop" films, such as *The Great Ziegfield*, they have been stipulating for the abolition of cheap matinée seats.

But even if the public should refuse to be mulcted of additional pennies, there remains, finally the possibility, in a largely unorganised trade, of exerting pressure on the last "flexible" item in the exhibitor's budget: the item of *labour cost*.

The degree to which the British exhibition industry, including even the largest circuits, has to-day already been reduced to a position of semi-colonial vassalage by the American renter-producers is glaringly illustrated by the following figures. In spite of the 16,000 cinemas in the United States alone and in spite of the wide distribution of American films in other countries, the American producers obtain *one third of their entire world revenue from British cinemas*. How this is done is revealed by a comparison of British and American exhibitor's costs. We have seen that the average expenditure of British cinema owners on film hire is 35-40 per cent. But in America, their own country, the major renters must be content with an average of only 25 per cent, labour costs amounting to another 25 per cent of the U.S.A. exhibitor's expenses. No one has ever computed the proportion of labour costs in British cinemas, but there is no doubt whatever, that on the

average they are even at present much below that figure.

To-day the British independent exhibitors are launching a determined campaign for what, to them, is a matter of life or death, the reduction of film hire charges. The major circuits are, publicly at any rate, keeping aloof from this agitation. Are they again going to let the independents bear the brunt of a struggle, the necessity for which is largely due to the circuits' policy in the past and which is as much their own fight, as it is that of the independents?

## THE STATE'S ACTION

We have so far refrained from touching on the impact of the Cinematograph Films Act 1927 and of the proposals now put forward for its amendment in the interests of the exhibitors. Enough has already been said of that bastard child of the first effort at state protection: the quota quickie. We shall, therefore, in the first place content ourselves with an examination of a much-praised feature of the 1927 Act, the prohibition of blind booking and the restriction of block booking. There is no doubt that by reducing the extent to which the existing exhibition outlets were tied-up for long periods in advance with American renters, this provision has benefited the developing British production industry. But it has, hitherto not been generally recognised that its effect on the interests of the exhibitors and particularly the independent exhibitors is becoming an exceedingly adverse one.

For in the first place it has removed one of the greatest obstacles to the rapid expansion of circuits. When contracts were entered into for long periods in advance, say from September to September, it was very difficult, if not impossible, for a new cinema to obtain bookings at all in the intervening period (since the location in question was already barred for major product by existing contracts). Secondly, however, blind booking reduced the ability of the renters to extort super charges for outstanding films. A contract would be entered into between the exhibitor and the renter for a stipulated number of films, the actual quality of which could not as yet be foreseen by either party. Both gambled on expectation and the renter had to meet the confidence shown by the exhibitor with the quid pro quo of reasonable average terms. The continued legality of blind and block booking in America is regarded by responsible exhibitors as one of the main reasons for the lower average rentals in the United States.

We turn, in conclusion, to the new quota proposals embodied in the White Paper for the amendment of the 1927 Films Act. The rejection of the quality test advocated by the Moyne Committee and its replacement by a minimum cost stipulation allowing highly expensive films to rank as double quota, must be examined in relation to the actual situation of the British production industry. Costly production by predominantly British producers, such as Gaumont or Associated British, will still depend on the availability of an American exhibition outlet and thus on the nature of their Anglo-American links. The remaining sphere of British "super" production at Denham and Pinewood is already to a large extent, if not entirely, tied up with American interests. Finally, most of the American producers not covered by these relationships, are now launching large-scale production schemes of their own in this country.

In such a situation the cost clause, and above all its double quota provision, must tend to accentuate still further the monopolistic control of the available film supply—American and "British"—by the major American renters. For it unquestionably discourages production experiments by less powerful independent producers.

It is true that the White Paper throws a temporary sop to the exhibitor by reducing his quota obligation. But for his bargaining power it does not really matter, whether the films he must hire are British or American, if in fact both are distributed by the same renter. Moreover, the Board of Trade proposals provide for a biannual revision of the quota ratio. Through their control of the British production industry it will not be difficult for the American renters to prove that an increase is impracticable in view of the available equipment and personnel, or even that a reduction in the quota percentage is imperative. For the exhibitor this means that his hands are still further tied in his dealings with the all-powerful American renting concerns. Circuits and independents alike will be left without any alternative source of supply. And it will only be a question of time, before the present situation of servility through the dictatorial enforcement of ruinous terms will be replaced by a relationship of open or covert control.

It is not, therefore, surprising that in the ranks of the exhibitors, as in those of the independent producers, the proposals of the White Paper issued by the Board of Trade are regarded as a *great betrayal*. For instead of hampering the monopolistic enslavement of the British film industry by the great American film combines, the proposed amendments of the British government's "protective" legislation will forge the fetters with which the Morgans and Rockefellers will tie the patient beast to its yoke.

# HOME RULE FOR BRITAIN

*(Extract from Editorial in the November "World Film News")*

The American drive to obliterate every vestige of a native British film industry is succeeding admirably. Cynics are comparing the situation with the Italian conquest of Abyssinia, and there are indeed certain resemblances. The Americans with their impressive supply of Hollywood pictures, have the necessary tank power to put native exhibitors at their mercy. They are using it remorselessly. With their large financial powers, they have been able to set up their own American production units here. By giving all their orders for Quota films—not unnaturally—to their own units, they have turned the independent British producer into a humble applicant at their factory gate. This, too, they are doing remorselessly. Within the past six months, the native film industry has disappeared as snow before the Chinook. Like the Abyssinians, we have a few native bandits, roving around in the fastnesses of Welwyn and Elstree, but sovereignty rests with the conqueror.

So far as films go, we are now a colonial people. We may hardly make or show films except by kind permission of our American masters and this is a fact which every producer and exhibitor in the country knows only too well. He may laugh off his subservience, as he completes the usual one-way deal with a member of the American renters' group, for, after all, beggars cannot be choosers. But he may not deny the subservience.

This is an interesting state of affairs, for we have had good reasons to like and admire the Americans. They are inventive and able. They are closest to ourselves in mind and spirit. But, to allow these cousins of ours to put a stranglehold on this fundamental power of national expression, which is the British cinema, is carrying blood-relationship a trifle too far. Lord Strabolgi talks of the "gratuitous attacks" which are being made on these American film methods. Yet we wonder. Casting our eye around on the young Britishers who might have made the British films as great as any, we find that they are either working for the American, or not working at all. Casting our eye round the exhibitors, who might one day come to be proud of showing native pictures, we find them either in the control of the Americans, or facing the disaster of no supply. The American capacity for squeezing out has the long tradition of the gangster films behind it.

It may be a poor business this film industry of ours, but it is at least our own. There is just a little left of it : enough to make a few independent spirited second-features : enough one might say, worth preserving and building into something better. Driven to the hills, these second features represent our last struggle in guerilla warfare. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Americans have announced their intention of destroying the second feature position. Our feeling is that in this case the American has gone too far.

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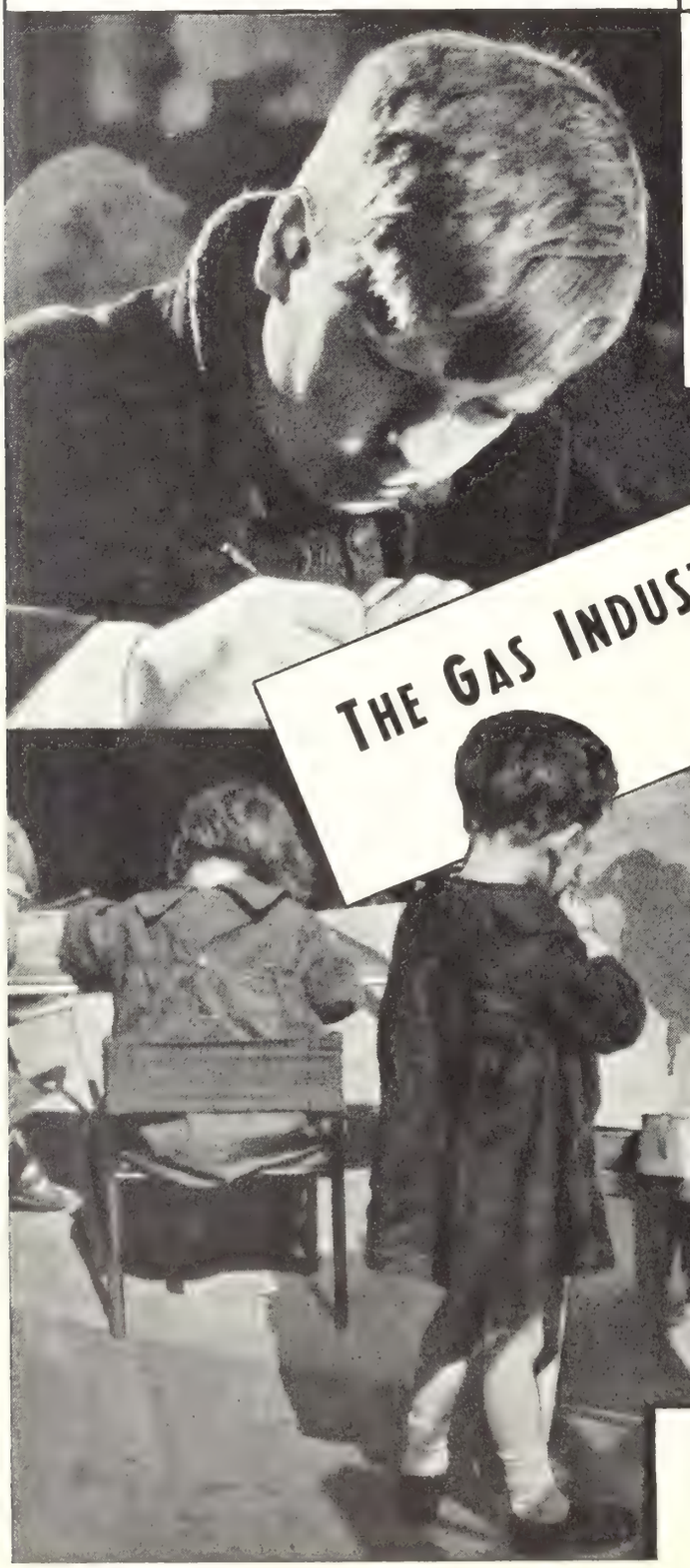

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# LAMENT

## for the

# GANGSTER

## by

## *Russell Ferguson*

*James ('Spats') Cagney in his new film "Something to Sing About."*

*Cagney in his first great gangster part, "Public Enemy." Picture from Gilbert Seldes' book "Movies for the Million," by permission of B. T. Batsford, Ltd.*

THERE are no toughs left nowadays.

There was a time when one could tell a man's moral complexion by the colour of his horse. That was in the days of the primitives, when the good ones on white horses chased the bad ones on black horses, and the casting director could do most of his work in the stables without human interference. It was a good system, because it meant that one knew how to bet, even when the horses were a mile away.

When the movies came off the range, and the camera got close enough to have a good look at the faces, the bad ones became stars in their own right. It is not so many years since Wallace Beery, Fred Kohler, and a third (was it George Bancroft?) lay in the same hollow under the same tree. This was a great waste of badness. Such faces were too valuable to be chucked about in threes. Fred Kohler snarled and bullied his way to success and a big fan-mail, Wallace Beery shortly graduated with honours as Pancho Villa, George Bancroft uglied himself through the great sea story period, the great lumber-camp period, and the great newspaper-office period.

This was the triumph of evil. It was clear that the plug-uglies had what it takes, and they got their innings. They were tough, brave, and they always died unrepentant.

*Paul Muni in the gangster classic, "Scarface."*

Little pallid clerks like you and me like to be tough by proxy. When Wallace Beery got half his arm shot away in a gang-fight in an East-side theatre, and somebody asked him what had happened, he said "a bee stung me." There was a man.

Ugliness improves with age, and never goes out of fashion. Warner Oland terrified a long succession of leading ladies, remaining Warner Oland when they were all forgotten. A certain Gustav von Seyffertitz or his brother Josef (they were indistinguishable) played the wicked Chancellor in what seemed like five or six hundred costume dramas, and nobody asked for anything better, though they had nothing to recommend them but ugliness and ill-will.

In the heyday of the bad men, when the crime wave hit the movies, there were not enough to go round. The old guard soared to unheard-of heights of courage and defiance. New bad ones, Paul Muni, Edward G. Robinson, James Cagney, George Raft, Spencer Tracy, Jack La Rue, took the oath and started in as Public Enemy No. 1, Little Caesar, Scarface, etc. Those were the days when reputations were made. An actor got a chance to be glorious in defeat, and die with a curse in the limelight. Everybody likes Satan, anyway, because he's scared of nobody and he can take it. Paul Muni, George Raft and company took it week after week, and the more they took the more valiant they became.

Of course it was all a game. The films had about as much to do with the vice rackets as George Arliss with the Duke of Wellington. A real villain, living by the proceeds of a chain of brothels or by bullying small shopkeepers, is as romantic as a dog with sore eyes. A stage villain is not a villain at all, he is a hero in the wrong football jersey.

And now, volte-face, change jerseys, we are in the middle of the great chest-shaving campaign. After a short probationary period as a G-man, James Cagney has become some kind of a dancing-master. Warner Oland is a detective. Edward G. Robinson (Little Caesar) passed through a hybrid stage as the police-man-criminal in *Bullets or Ballots*, and is now saying farewell to his tommy-gun in *The Last Gangster*.

Barton MacLane, the chief gangster who was the victim of Mr. Robinson's treachery, is now doing well as an attorney in *You Only Live Once*. The smaller gangsters have become policemen, the bigger ones are station superintendents. Soon everybody will be on the same side, kicking into an empty goal.

George Raft, formerly right hand man to Al Capone, takes office as lieutenant to Gary Cooper in a great-hearted effort to sweep slavery from the seven seas, and gives up his life for the woman he loves. Greater love hath no man than this. In his next film, perhaps he will be good enough to bring his violin.

Paul Muni (Scarface) goes in for science and social reform. He is now an old man with spectacles, most of the time. Jack La Rue and Humphrey Bogart are also on the side of the angels. Wallace Beery is reduced to domesticity and dipsomania. Clark Gable, a born tough, has had his nails pared for the part of the great lover. Spencer Tracy, that late flower of the gangster summer, is a taxi driver, against the bad ones. Those who reigned in hell now serve in heaven. All is lost, "the unconquerable will, and study of revenge, and courage never to submit or yield." Virtue, or at least the Hays office, wins the day.

Who is to take their place? Who will now be glorious in defeat? The losers nowadays are medical committees, bands of Red Indians, black men, nameless groups of gangsters. Paul Muni defeats the French medical profession, but a medical profession does not die with a snarl of defiance. A committee has no soul.

One tough, perhaps the toughest of all, has not yet degenerated into virtue. This is the unbreakable Captain Bligh, soon to be seen as Charles Laughton in *I, Claudius*. He is pretty well the last of them, and if he rats on us now, the game is up.

# EDITORIAL

## *Home Rule for Britain*

The American drive to obliterate every vestige of a native British film industry is succeeding admirably. Cynics are comparing the situation with the Italian conquest of Abyssinia, and there are indeed certain resemblances. The Americans with their impressive supply of Hollywood pictures, have the necessary tank power to put native exhibitors at their mercy. They are using it remorselessly. With their large financial powers, they have been able to set up their own American production units here. By giving all their orders for Quota films—not unnaturally—to their own units, they have turned the independent British producer into a humble applicant at their factory gate. This, too, they are doing remorselessly. Within the past six months, the native film industry has disappeared as snow before the Chinook. Like the Abyssinians, we have a few native bandits, roving around in the fastnesses of Welwyn and Elstree, but sovereignty rests with the conqueror. As Austin would say, he has "the power of the militia".

So far as films go, we are now a colonial people. We may hardly make or show films except by kind permission of our American masters and this is a fact which every producer and exhibitor in the country knows only too well. He may laugh off his subservience, as he completes the usual one-way deal with a member of the American renters' group, for, after all, beggars cannot be choosers. But he may not deny the subservience.

This is an interesting state of affairs, for we have had good reason to like and admire the Americans. They are inventive and able. They can write the English language into a cocked hat, and in fact have brought new power into English literature. Of all people, they are closest to ourselves in mind and spirit. But, to allow these cousins of ours to put a stranglehold on this fundamental power of national expression, which is the British cinema, is carrying blood-relationship a trifle too far. Lord Strabolgi talks of the 'gratuitous attacks' which are being made on these American film methods. Yet we wonder. Casting our eye around on the young Britishers who might have made the British films as great as any, we find that they are either working for the American, or not working at all. Casting our eye round the exhibitors, who might one day come to be proud of showing native pictures, we find them either in the control of the Americans, or facing the disaster of no supply. The American capacity for squeezing out has the long tradition of the gangster films behind it.

It may be a poor business this film industry of ours, but it is at least our own. There is just a little left of it: enough to make a few independent spirited second-features: enough one might say, worth preserving and building into something better. Driven to the hills, these second features represent our last struggle in guerilla warfare. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Americans have announced their intention of destroying the second feature position. Our feeling is that in this case the American has gone too far. He has loosed a detestation of the alien in our midst, which, in the film world, has spread like wildfire during the past few months. For all the pretty discussions of the English Speaking Union, it will not soon die down.

## *Short Films and the Nation*

Mr. Bruce Woolfe, head of Gaumont-British Instructional, has been campaigning for the better treatment of the short film in the new Cinematograph Act. The Government's recent proposals require that one in every twenty short films shall be British. Since short films occupy only a small part of the average programme, this proportion works out at fifteen seconds in every hundred minutes of running time. Mr. Bruce Woolfe protests, and behind him are all the British producers of documentary and short films.

Short films are treated with greater respect in Germany, Russia, and Italy. In Germany a film of cultural value carries with it freedom from entertainment tax. In Italy, the law makes it compulsory for one such film to be included in every programme. In democratic Britain, the Board of Trade concentrates more or less exclusively on the large commercial interests, whatever their source. It refuses these essentially British short films the same treatment as it allows to long films produced, directed and, as often as not, shot and acted by outsiders.

Perhaps it is not the Board of Trade's duty to consider national and cultural factors in presenting the new Cinematograph Act. But it is surely a duty of the Government as a whole. It is worth noting, therefore, that British short films have done much to describe the face of Britain and the Empire. They have trained a body of young directors and technicians. They have brought more international prestige to British production than the more costly ventures of the studios. They represent fifteen years of unselfish, often idealistic, effort on the part of just such men as Mr. Bruce Woolfe.

Mr. Bruce Woolfe only asks for equal treatment. It would be wise to grant it, and not merely in recognition of good work done. One shorts producer says that he has not minded the first ten years of intensive discouragement on the part of the Government, but that he is "damned if he will take another ten." The future of short films in Britain is evidently in danger.


# World Film News

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Cover Still: Luise Rainer and Spencer Tracy in *Big City*


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# A Greenhorn in the Wild West

## by Thomas Baird

**Hopi Indian in Ceremonial War Bonnet** (*Photo by the Author*)

THE sun was shining when I awoke. A long pencil of light was slanting into the compartment through a slit in the blind. All day, the day before, the train had plodded its way through the dust of Kansas. At night we had been enveloped in a cloud of fine driving sand. The green of the wheat lands had disappeared behind the yellow curtain of sand and the blue of the sky had been blotted out as in a fog. I fell asleep in the dark. But the sun was shining when I awoke.

No one who in his more tender years read with avidity the tales of Buffalo Bill and General Custer, lapped up the romance of sunbaked Arizona from Zane Grey and became captivated by the glamour of the Red Man as he stalked through the pages of the *Boys' Own Paper*, who remembers the thrills of Broncho Billy and the early Westerns and who still ferrets out their kind in side-street cinemas—could maintain a steady heart-beat on waking up one morning in the home of it all, with a flash of the desert sun slashing the dim compartment of a train. Nor could I.

I pushed up the blind and looked out. The train was moving slowly uphill. Reddish brown sandhills rolled back from the railroad. Scrubby pinon pine and juniper dotted the landscape. Here and there sage bush, green but already tinged with purple, started out of the sand. By the railway line rode a man on horseback. A wide-brimmed hat shielded his face from the sun. He wore a bright magenta shirt and about his throat there was a black kerchief. He pulled his horse round, waved his hand in greeting, and rode at a canter into the eye of the sun. There are still cowboys in the West.

THERE are still Indians in the West. There are Navajos and Hopis, descendants of great and noble tribes who roamed the plains and hills of Arizona and New Mexico.

To-day they live in reservations. You can go and gaze at them without even paying. There are excursions arranged so that you can go and gaze. They live in *pueblos*, in *adobe* houses; they farm small patches of land. Their ancestors were nomadic hunters, following the buffalo on the prairies which the white man has reduced to dust. They live a peaceable life, citizens of no country. Their fathers were warlike because they resisted the invasion of the white man. Sold in treachery they are now a spectacle for the white tourist for whom they perform at regular intervals; those of them who have not succumbed to the white man's diseases of tuberculosis, measles and so on. The ancient ceremonies of the Red Man are now the tea-time entertainment of the tourist. Feathers and paint, which once struck terror to the heart of the pioneer, now dance mockingly to amuse the travelling schoolma'am. There are still Indians in the West but they are degraded in their captivity. They pay an annual toll of many deaths to civilisation; soon their ignominy will be ended. With them will die some noble domestic arts.

THERE is an art gallery in Santa Fè. Many of the pictures depict the surrounding country. There are warm-toned oils of sunsplashed *adobe* houses, with the shadows streaking down from the joists, the inevitable

trail of red peppers hanging from the eaves and a tamarisk tree with its little pink flowers in the garden. Behind there rises a fantastically blue sky with unbelievably white clouds sailing across it. There are highly coloured groupings of aspen trees in all their yellow autumn glory. There are pictures of the desert in the haunting tones of early morning, in the blinding noon-day sun and in the mysterious nuances of evening. The gallery is a blaze of colour; quite fantastic but quite real. *Technicolour* could not with greater accuracy have transcribed the magic colour of the West as these artists have done. There is little need for an artist to imagine colour and there has been little imagination used. All the imaginative power has been reserved for another group. These are the portraits of the Indians. There are rows of realistic portraits, each of which might well have served as the cover design for the *B.O.P.* of a generation ago. There are lithe, semi-nude figures bending over lone fires in the desert, there are big heads of befeathered warriors in war paint, there are slim Indian maidens with single feathers who shield their eyes from the sunlight and peer into the distance. They are all beautiful, noble people, full of grace. These are works of imagination, for no one living has seen such Indians outside of a Wild West show.

**Navajo Children** (*Photo by the Author*)

BY the edge of the Grand Canyon there stood a ring of holiday makers. They were silent and expectant. From the door of an *adobe* house there issued half a dozen Indians in ceremonial dress. The leader wore a very grand feathered war bonnet but underneath his face was fat. The second in the string was a very old man; he might have been eighty. The others, two men and two women, were younger, rather fat and rather sad.

Slowly they processed around the ring for all to see. Taking up a place in the centre of the ring the chief announced in very good commercial English that he would sing the War Song of the Hopi Indians. Weird and wild whoops, accompanied by the stamping of feet and the tuck of a tom-tom flew over the heads of the audience and echoed down into the abyss of the Canyon. This was followed by a wild dance—the eagle dance, the victory dance of the Hopis. But the only victory today was the occasional nickel or quarter thrown condescendingly by the onlookers and deftly picked up by the eager Hopi children.

* * *

The older Indians do not like to be photographed. They are afraid of the evil eye. To take their likeness is to take virtue out of them. With their likeness in your possession you have the means of doing them harm. But the new generation is less superstitious. Another evil eye has fixed them. "Can I take your Picture?" "Ten Cents Please." Twenty-five cents will get most adults and a dollar will secure a full blown chief. Five dollars will give you the freedom of the *pueblo* except the sacred buildings. The *kiva* or religious house is tabu to a camera. No white man may enter and no *kiva* may be photographed even from the outside. In the *pueblos* where money does not mean very much you may still have your camera smashed for you. But there are few villages where a dollar does not mean several visits to the films.

ALBUQUERQUE is more modern than most small towns in the West. That is to say a stroll down the main street discovers several large stores, a few restaurants, well-dressed shop windows with a good display of wares. There are traffic signals at the crossings. There are at least three picture houses with modern cinema architecture. One of them is an Indian cinema. That is to say when the Indians decide to see a film they go to "The Mesa" and not to the more gaudy palaces on the other side of the street.

In the shady side of the street there are several cowboys. From under five-gallon hats they survey the posters advertising *Shall We Dance?* They rock backwards on red cuban heels as they contemplate a life-size cut-out of Ginger Rogers. Presently they make up their minds, fish into the pockets of red, yellow or green shirts and produce their 55 cents and pass inside. Just beyond the cinema I can see the plains of New Mexico and beyond that the hills of Arizona. Inside there is another glamour. The quid chewing, hard riding cowboy with the dust of Arizona on his boots, worships at the feet of Ginger Rogers; even as you and I. On the other side of the street a few Indians in dungarees move quietly along the side walk. They stop at "The Mesa". Quietly they eye the stills of *The Gay Desperado* which decorate the front of the house. From their pockets they produce their 15 cents and pass inside. A mile or two away is a *pueblo* where the Indians drag out a dreary existence, being looked at by inquisitive tourists. Inside the cinema they too can look at the West as the tourists do and thrill to the excitements which were once the daily life of their race. The noble Red Man, the Hunter, the Warrior goes to the cinema for his excitements and thrills. Ironically he chooses the stories of the romantic West; even as you and I.

In the cinema rows of dark faces stare in silence at the screen. A pale-faced young man is making love to a blonde. The audience is unmoved. Suddenly the scene changes: a *posse* tears across the desert. Scattering the sand among the cactus plants, they whirl and swerve. The audience whoops and roars with delight. They applaud and stamp their feet. Then the pale-faced youth and his maiden and again silence. Horses again and more whoops. A bandit falls off his horse and there are screeches of delight. A sequence of wise-cracking brings silence again. As Leo Carrillo struggles with Chicago slang the audience is not amused. I laugh at a crack, but it is like gallows laughter in a cathedral. Soon Carrillo is infuriated by the muteness of a stubborn and comic Indian. The audience shrieks. Across the street the cowboys are lounging in the plush covered seats, nodding gently to the rhythms of Ginger Rogers and tapping out the time to Fred Astaire.

LATER on the edge of the town I pass two cowboys kicking their heels. The sun has set and the sky is like velvet. The air is warm. The tobacco smoke floats down the slight breeze. "Swell dame, uh?" says one. Walking along a sandy path into the desert is a little group of Indians. They move quietly but they are still laughing. Beyond are the Arizona hills and, between, the sand lies white in the moonlight. The Indians are soon lost to sight in the pinon and juniper but their laughter rings clear in the quiet.

Most of the tourists in the town went to see *The Plainsman*, to see the Indian in his glory and the pioneer wreathed in all his power, to see the life which has passed from the West.

# "NIGHT M

## Discussed by

# EMLYN

## Whose stage performa

## contrasted with the sc

## Robert Montgomery i

## film version. Interv

THE sex-tormented Angelo leaves the nun, and I make my way to the stage-door of the Old Vic. It is half past nine when Mr. Emlyn Williams has half an hour rest during the playing of *Measure for Measure*.

In his grey gown, he is studying his part, his feet up on a chair, Angelo's auburn wig on the table.

"Please excuse my not getting up," said the young man with the greying hair. "This half-hour is almost my only rest during the day. Apart from *Measure for Measure* during the evenings and some afternoons, we are rehearsing *Richard III* mornings and afternoons including Sundays." The voice is low, musical, restrained, Welsh, and sometimes sounds like Robert Speaight's. The eyes are deep blue, the manner gentle, deprecating but reserved and watchful.

He offered me a drink but refused one for himself. "I never drink while acting." We talked of *Measure for Measure*. "Yes, it does remind you of Maugham's *Rain*, doesn't it? Human nature is fairly constant."

Then we got down to the subject of *Night Must Fall*. "I thought they filmed it extremely well," said the author. "Montgomery made an extraordinarily successful emergence from playboy parts, and his clothes were so right. I didn't want to play in the film myself. I'd been in the play too long and was getting a bit tired of it. I can't say to what extent Montgomery based his performance on mine. An actor never knows what his own performance looks like. Montgomery came round with Noel Coward to see me after the first night in New York. I found him and his wife most charming, unassuming and intelligent people.

"Van Druten's adaptation showed understanding of the play and of requirements of the film medium, and direction was able. The atmosphere of the wood came over with great effect. Fritz Lang, I agree, would have made a marvellous job of it, and so may Hitchcock, although he might have been a little too subtle and symbolical.

"Yes, the changed ending in the film does weaken it. The attempt to satisfy propriety by giving the girl a nice young man to replace Dan is not only untrue to character and unconvincing, but fails to register on the mind. The young man simply doesn't 'come over'. I don't think that the changing of the ending implies that film audiences are of inferior intellects to those in the theatre. It was purely an error of judgment of the makers of the film. Why annoy the small, intelligent public who would go to the film because they had liked the play?

"Still I have no serious complaint. The job, as a whole, was well done. I'm not one of those who can admire either stage or film only at the expense of decrying the other. I've practised both mediums. Apart from my stage work, I adapted *The Case of the Frightened Lady* for the screen, acted in *Men of To-morrow*, wrote and acted in *Friday the 13th*.

"I acted in *Evensong* with Evelyn Laye, *The Dictator*, and adapted and acted in *Broken Blossoms*. I adapted *I, Claudius*, and, by the way, there are rumours that Korda may soon continue with it.

"The film techniques of writing and acting are difficult in different ways from the stage techniques. More intensity and concentration are needed when the camera is turned on your face alone, and you have to convey an emotion by the flicker of an eyelid. And in film writing, there are camera angles and so many similar things to be remembered all at once. But I like scenario writing—so long," in significant measured tones, "as one has a free hand.

"I didn't do much stage work at Oxford," he continued. "It's rather strange. This is the first time I've played in Shakespeare since I took the part of the boy who carries the swords in the OUDS production at Christ

# ...UST FALL"

## ...the author,

# ...WILLIAMS

## ...nce as Danny will be ...een characterisation by ...he currently released ...ew by Henry Adler

Church of *Love's Labour Lost*. And I've never seen *Richard III* acted!"

When I said that I had seen Peter Glenville play Richard in the OUDS production in Regent's Park, it became my turn to be interviewed. "How did Glenville do it! He seems to be too tall and good-looking for the part! Rather like Long John Silver was he? And how did William Devlin look in the part?" I pointed to the swarthily sinister Richard painted by Robertson in his costume design which stood in the corner. "Like that, eh? That's how I'd pictured him.

"When I left Oxford in 1927, I played Pepy's boy in J. B. Fagan's *And So To Bed* at the Savoy and the Globe, acted in my own play *Glamour* at the Court, and put on my play *A Murder Has Been Arranged*, with Margaretta Scott in one of her first West End parts. Then I acted in Sean O'Casey's play *The Silver Tassie*—a great play in some ways. Acting in it, it is difficult for me to judge, but I feel its presentation was bungled.

"I don't know why *Spring* 1600 failed," he said in reply to my inquiry about his highly praised play of Elizabethan England. "But I'm rewriting it, and I hope that Gielgud will produce it again. I adapted *Christopher Bean* from the French, and wrote *Vessels Departing*, which might have had a West End run had it not been that Flora Robson, who played in it at the Embassy could not stay in the cast, and we could not think of anyone else capable of the part. Then there was *Night Must Fall*. That play, by the way, had no real link with the Jacoby case. The theme was almost entirely imaginative. *He Was Born Gay* was a disappointment, but the public was right: it was too much a mixture of farce and tragedy. I hope to write another play. No, I don't know what its theme will be."

"THE modern poetic drama derives a lot of its swiftness in production from the film," he said. "In fact, production generally has been speeded up by the influence of film technique plus, in Shakespeare, the enlightened conception of fluent playing of scenes, without long intervals, an advance popularised by William Poel, Granville Barker and, now, by Tyrone Guthrie at the Old Vic. The attempts at the spectacular and the general technique in such plays as *Cavalcade*, *Crest of the Wave*, and in such melodramas as *Wanted for Murder*, and similar efforts, show that the stage has been spurred to emulate its rival.

"There is a reciprocal influence. Films like *The Petrified Forest* reveal that the stage has goaded the screen to essay a higher intellectual level, has imposed on the camera the task of showing the excitement in thoughts instead of thugs and in emotions instead of machine guns. These films attempt to present characterisation and abstract issues—a great advance.

"I see no reason why Shakespeare should not be filmed. I didn't see *Romeo and Juliet*, but I'm afraid I must be unpopular and say I liked *The Midsummer Night's Dream*. The apparition of the fairies was so well done. Cagney, of course, stole the picture. He's a grand actor. You know, if Montgomery hadn't played Dan in *Night Must Fall*, I should have chosen Cagney.

"British films? I think we're making great progress. And Korda has taken a step in the right direction by presenting a cup for the best film acting in an academy which teaches dramatic art. Stage experience is admittedly a good grounding for film work, but the latter's peculiar technique needs learning. I don't know which I should choose between stage and screen were I compelled. It's good to be at the Old Vic and to feel the reactions of human beings again after the cold eye of the camera. If I were hard put to it, I suppose I'd plump for the stage. But comparisons here are especially odious. Stage and screen—what are they but two facets of one thing—the Theatre!"

"Ten sixty six is the year we fix
"For the battle of Hastings Hill,
"When Harold was beaten by William
the first,
"That monarch of iron will."

THAT is history. I was taught it in school. I know.

Edward I, Edward II, Edward III, Edward IV, Edward V, Edward VI, Edward VII, Edward VIII.

Henry I, Henry II, Henry III, Henry IV, Henry V, Henry VI, Henry VII, Henry VIII. That is history too.

Stephen I. Unfortunately for history tables there are not many of him. But I know what happened:—

"For nineteen years through blood and
tears
Men harried with fire and sword."

You cannot teach me history. I have learnt it. Blood, and battles, and sex life in the palace. Nobles and kings and queens. Because, you see, these are the only things which matter. Of course, some other things happened too. But nothing very much. There was a thing called the Renaissance. It is a little important because they invented gun-powder then, so that they could have better battles. Then there was Religion. That was a bit important, because it made Charles I have his head cut off. And anything which happens to a king is history.

The British film producers (and those who were born in Central Europe) went to the same school as me. Anyway, we learned history from the same books.

Perhaps Mr. Wilcox did Queen Victoria's reign from my school-book. Anyway, he knows history too. She came to the throne at eighteen because she was a girl. There was a man called Melbourne. Of course, Mr. Wilcox knows he is not really history but *politics*, which one does not mention in good history books or films. Still he met the Queen. So one must say something about him. So one does not say much about what he did, but only what he said to the Queen, because that is history.

Then Queen Victoria met Albert. We can have four reels of that because this is sex in a palace and the most important kind of history. Of course, the sex was so refined, you hardly knew it was going on. But then sex in history doesn't really work like it does in you and me, unless it happens in Henry VIII—who is the exception which proves the Ruler.

While Victoria was having her four reels' worth of Albert, England went through the Industrial Revolution. There were Chartists. There was Faraday and Stephenson. There was the Great Exhibition. Gas, electricity, power looms, sulphuric acid, railways.

But these are not history because they did not run into Queen Victoria or Albert much. Cobden had something to do with Corn Laws. Queen Victoria had them altered and this stopped people being hungry. This bit is history.

All sorts of things were found out about medicine. Mr. Wilcox is content with Anna Neagle's Soothing Syrup.

The industrial revolution helped to make railways which were for Queen Victoria to ride in. Besides they made her coachman look funny. Coachmen are not history because they are not well born. You can laugh at them, but not at history.

Some people think the Great Exhibition of 1851 is very important. But it is not, because it is not history. All the same, Albert had a lot to do with it, which you might think made it history. But you are wrong. The Great Exhibition was about Industry, and not even a Prince can make industry into history. Albert was just a wee bit vulgar to be interested in it, though a Prince cannot be really vulgar.

Albert signed lots of papers. One must not know what they were, because that would be politics. He signed one paper, however, which stopped a war with America. War is history, so we can know about that one.

AMERICANS learn a different kind of history. They do not always know about kings and queens. (But then, what can you expect with people who speak differently from you and

*Home Life of James Watt—"The Boy who played with the Kettle"—*

# 1066 —

**Let the Americans do what they will, avoid such subjects as the industrial and Watt, and keep to the old school**

*and of George Stephenson, showing a commendable leisure-time diligence*

# THE YEAR WE FIX

## says Arthur Elton. British film makers must revolution, such figures as Stephenson history books

me?) They heard of Pasteur. They made a film about him. They tried to explain what effects his discoveries had on ordinary people round about the place. But then Pasteur was a Frenchman, not like you and me, so he does not count. And then they have heard of Zola. Such bad form, and a socialist too. Still he was French so he does not count. Disraeli. Lloyds of London. Parnell. Then they make films, not about royalty but about the rise of their great industries and transport. No; the Americans do not know history.

TAKE a look at one or two people who are not history so that if you make a film you will know what it is not to be about. There is James Watt. He was a poor man who made mathematical instruments. He is not history except in one way. One point of history is to tell you things which did not happen. James Watt did not find steam by holding a spoon over the spout of a kettle. So this part of him always comes in history.

James Watt was born in Glasgow in 1736. He moved to London in 1755 to carry on his trade as a maker of mathematical instruments. He had few friends and was terrified by the Press Gang. He used to hide away and make models. He had eight shillings a week and could not live on less "for fear of pinching his belly." So his health was bad afterwards. He married a girl who helped him all her life. Friends said he was "modest, timid, easily frightened by rubs and misgivings and too apt to despond."

In 1763 he was asked to repair a model steam engine. He did so and discovered a way of improving steam engines. This discovery helped to create a new civilisation.

James Watt founded (with Boulton) a great factory in Birmingham. He was the first great industrial capitalist.

He was usually gloomy. But in 1779 he wrote this letter:—

> Hallelujah! Hallelujee!
>
> We have concluded with Hawkesbury—£217 per annum—from Lady Day last, £275 5*s*. for time past, £117 our account.
>
> We make them a present of 100 guineas. Peace and good fellowship on earth—Perrins and Evans to be dismissed—3 more engines wanted in Cornwall—Dudley repentant and amendant—
>
> Yours rejoicing,
> James Watt.

That tells you enough to avoid knowing about James Watt.

So that you make no mistake, take another example—George Stephenson. History says he invented the first railway engine in 1830, called *The Rocket*. He comes into history because he did not do this. He made the nineteenth engine called *The Blucher* in 1814. *The Rocket* was the forty-fifth engine and made in 1829.

Stephenson was poor, and messed about with steam pumping engines in coal mines. As a young man he was famous for his strength. When his wages were raised to 12*s*. a week, he said he was a made man for life. He had a sweetheart and they say he used to love to mend her shoes. He would carry them about in his pocket and look at them to remind him of his girl. He had a hard life. He began to get a reputation when he repaired a pumping engine.

In 1814 he built his first locomotive. In 1829 a great competition of locomotives was held. Everyone turned out to watch. Out of six or seven lumbering machines, Stephenson's *Rocket* won the day.

In 1830 the Liverpool and Manchester Railway was opened. A man called Huskisson went to speak to the Duke of Wellington. He was cut down by a locomotive, and the train which carried the wounded Huskisson to the city covered fifteen miles in twenty-five minutes. Stephenson did more than any other man to spread railways.

But, thank God, our English film men have taste and know history. Let the Americans do what they will. Never from an English studio shall we dirty our screens with Robert Stephenson, James Watt, the Industrial Revolution, Newton, Gainsborough (pretty bad taste, those London Film people making *Rembrandt*, still he was a dirty foreigner), Shakespeare, Gladstone. Thank God for British History Books.

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# Where British Films Go Wrong

## by Sydney Horler

A WRITER for whose work I have long had a great admiration—he is a man of culture and discernment—has just permitted himself a wail of agony. He has put into print what so many others of us have long known: namely, that, to quote his own words: "Above all things the Cinema needs authorship." And when he says 'Cinema,' he means chiefly the British Film Industry.

For many years, British films have been submerged in a slough of crass incompetence. This is not an opinion; it is a *fact*. There are now certain encouraging signs of improvement—the films produced by Mr. Victor Saville are perhaps the best example of what I mean—but there is still a long way to go. The old cry of the incompetent British film producer was that (*a*) America had unjustly scorned his product and (*b*) that he was not being given sufficient money to compete with Hollywood. Both statements were absolutely untrue. If British pictures had been good enough, they would have had an ample showing on American screens; whilst the millions that have been lost to investors through sheer squandermania by people who had no more right to handle this money than the average man-in-the-street, proves the falsity of the latter plaint.

*No: what was wrong could be traced directly to general stupidity.*

Many of the people lately in charge did not know the very elements of their business. They did not realise the patent fact, apparent to everyone else, that you cannot hope to make a good film unless you have a good story. And who provides the good stories? Why, competent authors. As the writer of the article I have in mind says: "When are we going to turn out something to stand beside *It Happened One Night* and *Lady for a Day?*" When, indeed!

Many sins are laid at Hollywood's door, but at least they know what they are about. American producers like Sam Goldwyn, Paramount, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and other companies have gone to work in the right way: they have engaged the best available authors in America and have paid them huge sums for their output. Apart from Mr. Korda and Mr. Saville (who, I believe, has not had a free hand until recently), what have the other British studios done?

Let me tell you: they have engaged authors —hacks, most of them—of no literary importance whatever (with a very few exceptions), and have expected them to produce work which could stand up to the literary craftsmanship of such writers as Sidney Howard, the famous American dramatist; Robert Riskin, that scenario-writer of genius, and a host of others. Is it any wonder, then, that in the past American films have been successes, whilst the average British effort earned nothing but contempt from sophisticated West End audiences?

If some of the incredible things that have happened to British writers in native film studios were related in cold print, they would be passed over as the ravings of a maniac. The author I have quoted above says that he once wrote 70,000 words—*from which ten words were actually used!* He was lucky! Another author of my acquaintance was summoned to a conference, told that a story this company intended screening was not up to standard, and asked his price to re-write the scenario. He sat up for three days and three nights to do the job—and was later told that the whole of his work had been scrapped! Fortunately, he had been paid his money. A book of mine which was taken for the screen some years ago, was boiled down to one small situation, invented by me, whilst the rest of the film was a hotch-potch of inconsequent nonsense. I was grateful that the title of my novel was changed.

AND the tragic part is that we have in this country men quite capable of competing with the brilliant writers of Hollywood—and, in the case of essentially British stories, beating them. Why are they not employed?

[*Howard Coster*

**Sydney Horler**

Time and time again in the reviews of British films published in the technical papers, you find such phrases as "story trivial and unconvincing"; "The plot is a mass of incoherent details and forced situations," "whilst the direction is fair, the story is paltry and weak," etc., etc. The producers are condemned by their own trade journals.

So long as this slovenly and incompetent system prevails, so long will British films fail in their first essential: good entertainment. Far too many native films never stand a ghost of a chance because the authorship at the back of them is so palpably negligible. The Moguls of the British Film Industry in the past appeared to think that the author was merely a necessary nuisance. They have paid extravagant prices to actors and directors and expected them to work wonders with a script which wasn't worth the paper on which it was typewritten.

Another grave fault has been starting the film before the scenario was put into workmanlike shape. I remember a year or so ago, lunching with a certain author in a West End hotel. He apologised as he sat down, saying, "We may be interrupted; I'm doing some work on a film scenario and I expect my collaborator along here at any minute." Sure enough, the said collaborator arrived—in a bath of perspiration, and clutching a few sheets of dirty typescript in his right hand. At some studio or other the film was at that moment being actually "shot." Amazing!

Is it any wonder that when the film in question was being shown to the public, it met with scant courtesy?

BUT one could go on for ever telling equally incredible stories. I myself have a vivid memory of being invited to a most palatial set of offices in the West End, and there ushered into the presence of a gentleman who coupled a Mussolini-like attitude with very questionable linen. He explained that he telephoned me for the express purpose of buying the film rights of certain of my novels. He talked in thousands of pounds with an airy grace; I dreamt of buying yachts and a castle in Spain (this was before the Civil War). But when I returned three days later to sign the contract, the gentleman had disappeared, and I never saw him again! I discovered later that he was an undischarged bankrupt, and that on the very day that he had been discussing thousands of pounds with me, he was trying to borrow a fiver from an actor friend. . . .

These—and many other examples of major lunacy—are some, not all of the reasons why the British Film Industry until quite recently was a by-word in the world of entertainment. All thanks and credit to Alexander Korda, Victor Saville, and others of their kind (alas! how few they still are!) for setting to work to bring about a highly-desired revolution.

*Finally: it will not be until the British Film Industry has purged itself completely of the many undesirable characters who brought it so low in the past, that it will stand any reasonable chance of taking its rightful place as a legitimate world production-centre of this form of popular entertainment.*

When it does so,—when it stands solidly and resolutely on its feet and issues a worthwhile challenge to Hollywood—then, and only then, will it have the common gumption to recognise that good stories, written by good authors, are the very backbone of screen successes.

Hollywood has proved it—and Hollywood *knows!*

# BERMONDSEY'S FILMS DISCUSSED

by Dr. DONALD GREGG

*Until such time as the central authorities awaken to the value of the film for educational purposes, the medical officer who desires to use films for propaganda work will have to make them for himself.*

D. M. CONNAN, M.B., B.S., D.P.H., M.D.H. for Bermondsey, 1927.

And that is just what he did! In 1923, with no experience other than of still photography, with no professional assistance, with no successful models to guide him, the whole work was started from scratch. Aided by assistants from his Public Health Department in spare time and in odd hours, he prepared his theme, wrote his scenario, shot his material, edited his "rushes" on the cutting bench, composed and inserted his titles and captions (for these were silent-film days) and left only the processing and final assembly to a commercial firm.

The work was almost immediately successful and in 1924 he produced *Where There's Life There's Soap*—his first masterpiece which is still in use and highly popular in the borough. Technically it bears all the virtues of the "primitive"—it is simple in form, it is direct and sometimes brutal in statement, it never strays from the theme and allows itself no luxury of dwelling with self-conscious vanity on its many happy "shots." This film was designed primarily for use in schools for children of all ages and its construction is worth noting. Dr. Connan first composed some verses on Soap, in snappy doggerel.

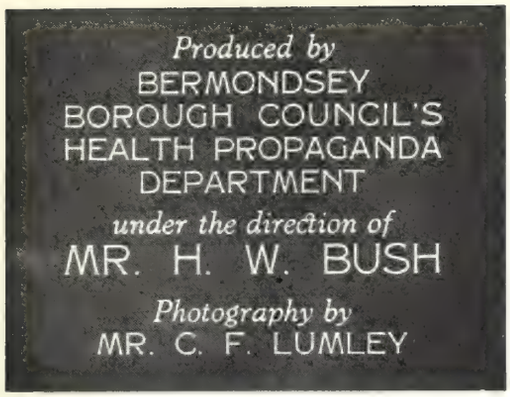
Children like this sort of thing and will gaily recite and sometimes sing the verses. A couplet or a verse is first thrown on the screen and then illustrated by a short film sequence. Then follows the next verse, usually a contrasting one, and again the illustration. And so on it goes through the whole soap and dirt epic, each episode short and vigorous. The film then closes with a series of shots demonstrating the special bathing facilities available in Bermondsey.

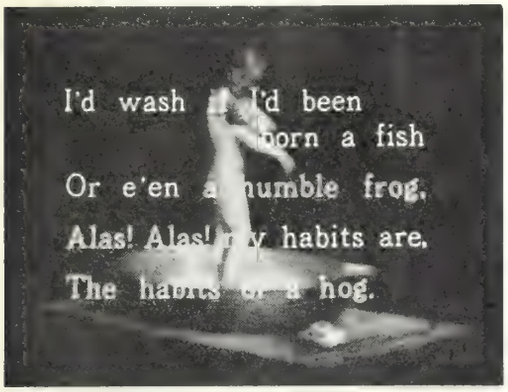
Dr. Connan has travelled far since these early days. Now he runs a film-unit, early spare-time assistants are full-time film producers, a studio exists in the yard behind the Town Hall for shooting interior scenes, and musical backgrounds and synchronised commentaries are prepared on discs to accompany the films. Fourteen films have earned their place in the library (1936) and about two films are added each year. Experiments with colour-films are now in progress and hundreds of feet of beautiful coloured stock are in the library ready to illustrate Bermondsey's growing amenities. Other films deal with Milk Supply, Food Supply and Kitchen Hygiene, Tuberculosis, Maternity and Child Welfare, Clothing, Germs, Fleas, Bugs, and Hopping.*

*For complete list see Catalogue of British Medical Films issued by British Film Institute, price 1/-.

His latest production is a full length feature film. It is modestly entitled *Some Activities of the Bermondsey Borough Council.* It is a straightforward statement of some of the many services and responsibilities that lie in the work of a modern metropolitan borough. Principally are noted the major works of Electric Supply, Water Supply, and Cleansing, the highly specialised service of Public Health with its chain of clinics and the humbler labours of those who repair (and alas! too often tear up) our roads and pavements. Nor is it forgotten that Bermondsey is a huge port with a two-mile frontage on the river, dealing with a large percentage of the nation's imports of meat and breakfast table foodstuffs. The borough owes to this wider family the duty of inspecting this supply.

A large part of the film deals with Bermondsey's Housing Problem and records some of the pathetic dwellings of its slum streets and courts and shows, more happily, the demolition and rebuilding which is the borough's present task. The younger generation is shown the difficulties of this work in the local scarcity and high cost of building sites, and this film may rouse them to solve, in their day of power, these twin obstacles of progress. Lastly among these severely practical works is shown the borough's new work of beautifying itself by trees and flowered parks, its famous tulip and dahlia display and its holiday home for nursing mothers and



toddlers at Fairby Grange in Kent. These last sequences are done in colour. Here is a superb document of civic education and it cannot fail to arouse the youth of Bermondsey to a fuller sense of citizenship. The picture was prepared with a synchronised commentary but it is the highest tribute to the cinematic skill of this picture that it is generally run as a silent film.

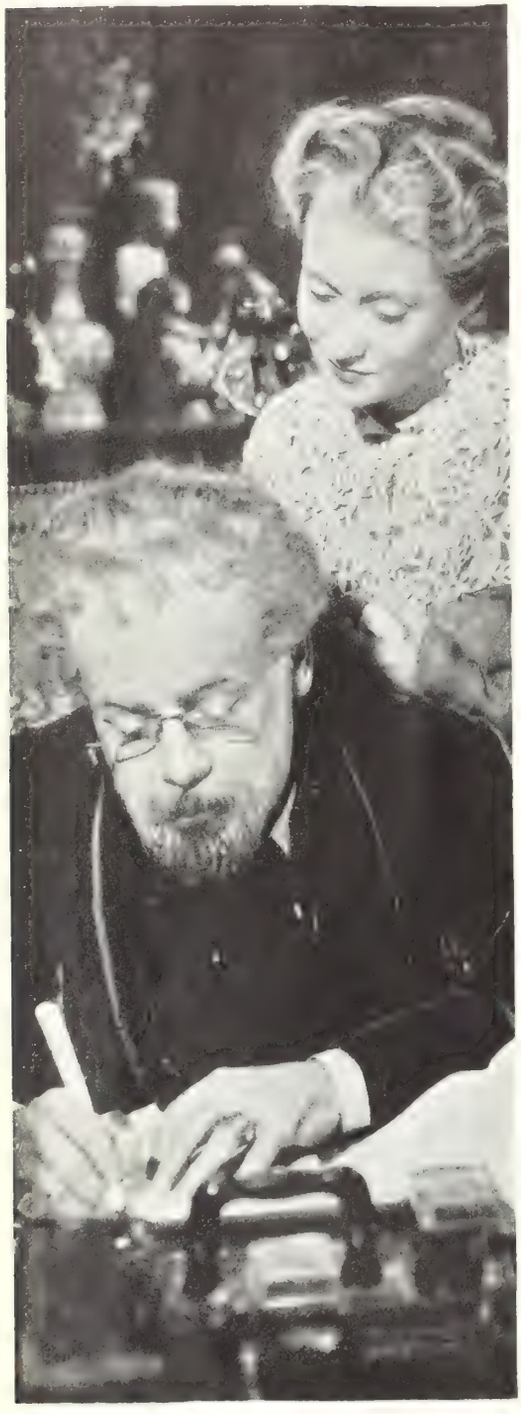
Dr. Connan had this advantage in making his films—that he was catering for a very definite public. His films were made for the Bermondsey schools and streets. His message had to be simple, his words had to smash home. Humour, slapstick, the belly-laugh were all useful weapons, but these must reek of the city street. *The Tale of Two Titties*—the clean teat and the dirty teat—might disgust at a West End premiere, but it can bring mirth by the market stalls.

Countryside shots had their place too. For slum children there is endless delight and excitement in the cow, the pig, the ducks, and even that most superb of "box-office" beasts—the elephant—has been a "star" under Dr. Connan's direction.

These films are now available in 35 mm. and 16 mm. non-flam stock and are in constant use. On four afternoons a week, one of the borough Medical Officers goes to a school, gives a short lecture, shows a few slides and ends his programme with one or two appropriate films shown by the Council's projector apparatus. In winter evenings the films are in constant demand for public meetings, social clubs, political societies, Scout and Guide movements. But most exciting of all are the exhibitions in the street. Throughout the borough are a number of power plugs on electric standards—usually in quieter streets where evening traffic is slight and crowds are readily gathered. On two evenings a week from April to October, just about sun-down, a red and yellow projector van with its slogan *Here Comes Good Health* rolls to its position. A loudspeaker crashes out its rousing music—Sousa-stuff that never fails to arrest and draw—an audience clots behind the van, two or three hundred strong in a few minutes, and the show is on! The "flicks" exercise their old spell, the crowd is hushed and attentive, children cease their play to gape, the busy citizens stop, the old men cock their ears to get the message.

It is not unimportant to add that Bermondsey's first projector van was home-made too on an old Ford chassis at a cost of some £200. Projector vans could not even be purchased in these days. Their latest van—a striking and processional affair—owes little to Big Business, for it was built locally to the Health Department's specification. And so it comes that it is "Health Week" all the year round in Bermondsey.

# Alberto Cavalcanti praises



# MUNI'S great performance in THE LIFE of EMILE ZOLA

EUROPEAN producers should feel ashamed of themselves after seeing the second of the film biographies starring Paul Muni, for these films deal with subjects far more suited to production on this side of the Atlantic. Both deal with European subjects, but both are made worthily and with greatness by Hollywood.

No cost has been spared in making the later scenes in the film, such as the law court scenes during the Dreyfus case, in which there is a generous display of officers' uniforms, and some excellent period costuming of the women to add to its brilliance. The film has some unexpected and ingenious sequences, such as the one in which the crowd is covered by a sea of umbrellas shining in the rain, which comes when the ordinary crowd scenes and the shouts of "Down with Zola" threaten to become monotonous, and the pursuit of Zola in a hansom cab by the angry crowd. But these and other impressive features cannot conceal a lack of cohesion in the script itself.

Zola is seen first with his friend Cézanne in their poverty ridden Paris garret. Both are determined to destroy the lies and conventionalities of contemporary art and literature and to establish truth as the touchstone for their work. Then follows some weak dialogue and some unsatisfactory sequences showing the poverty of 1871, which never succeed in establishing the actual horrors of that year, with its stories of people driven by hunger to eat rats.

The first part of the film finishes by a clever little comedy showing a bourgeois couple hiding from each other the simultaneous purchase of Zola's 'Nana'. The success of his novels led to his becoming an established writer, and brought him considerable prosperity.

Success brings complacency, but the Dreyfus case plunges him again into the fight for truth and into a vortex of political controversy which at first threatens to destroy him.

The relation between the writer and the polemist is never very clear in the script in spite of the early passages about his search for truth. This relation would have been much less clear but for Muni's brilliant playing of Zola.

One of the best pieces of screen acting that I have ever seen is the casual reading at the newspaper office of the famous letter "J'accuse" in which Muni combines perfectly the writer with the polemist. It would have been easy for Muni to be tense and moving—like Laughton reciting Lincoln in *Ruggles of Red Gap* or the Bible in *Rembrandt*—but, instead, Muni reads it as if Zola were half trying its balance to himself, and half confiding it to his friend, not at all sure of its explosive effect.

I must confess that I like this better than the later speech in the 'Palais de Justice'. But by this time the steady march of the conflict over Dreyfus had taken us all in such a strong grip that critical examination is no longer possible. While many of us could not help throwing forward into our own day the effective exposure of the French Army's dictatorial methods, many of the women in the audience were moved to tears by the playing of Dreyfus by Joseph Schildkraut.

Besides Joseph Schildkraut, H. O'Neill as Colonel Picard, Gale Sondergaard as Mme. Dreyfus and Gloria Holden as Mme. Zola are all first rate. Sokoloff, so much appreciated for his past work on the continent, is much less successful as Cézanne. His acting seems too subtle. He gives the impression of being a timid soul. In the scene in which he reproaches Zola for his complacent enjoyment of wealth and literary success, he lacks the necessary authority.

But what a hard test for any actor to stand beside Muni! Muni's is a truly beautiful performance. Handicapped to begin with by his slim figure he soon makes you forget this by his successful creation of Zola's heavy build as we have always imagined it.

And then, how tempting it must have been for a clever actor to use all the little tricks and gestures which the playing of this little Frenchman offered him. Instead, Muni plays with such restraint and discretion that it is impossible to praise him enough.

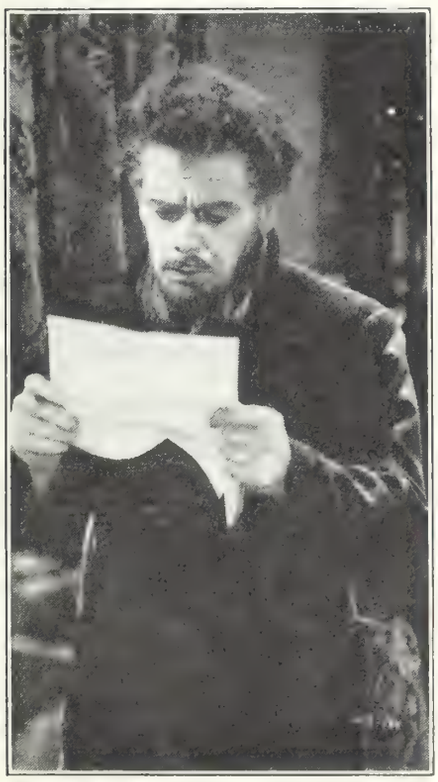
No doubt many critics will affirm that *The Life of Emile Zola* is essentially Paul Muni's film. I don't think so. Its main points are entirely outside the character of Zola, a fact which undoubtedly makes Muni's task more difficult and must make our praise of him even greater.

As a whole, I think *The Story of Louis Pasteur* was better constructed. Its comparative simplicity of style fitted the story and the characters, whereas Zola, a much more costly affair, with all the perfection of its direction, does not succeed in fitting the subject so adequately. In the case of *Pasteur* the producers did hit on a fitting style—perhaps by accident. In the case of Zola one feels that they have not brought to the screen the school of thought which Zola represented, and the vital part that his realist-school played in the evolution of art.

It is good to show the bourgeois couple buying 'Nana', and their hypocrisy in concealing the purchase. But behind this simple incident there was a hard and glorious fight. Behind this there were quite a few immortal pages in Zola's books. Behind this were the paintings of Cézanne. Behind this was a revolution that gave birth to a whole new world of art that I am afraid the cinema, still bound to sentimentalism and romanticism, has not yet discovered how to express.

*The struggling author's meeting with Nana. Vladimir Sokoloff as Cézanne, Paul Muni as Zola, Erin O'Brien-Moore as Nana*

*Zola in middle-age: the prosperous author entertains Cézanne, the friend of less successful years*



*Zola reading of the great success of his novel, "Nana"*

*Indicted for criminal libel, Zola makes his final appeal to the jury*

# FIVE FILMS

## by John Grierson

ZOLA, now at the Carlton, will almost certainly turn out to be one of the great films of the year. Other films like *Lost Horizon* have been as big in scale; but none has been more weighty in theme and sincere at heart. Like most people who work at cinema, I see too many films: respecting most of them for the labour and the ingenuity I know they contain and, in one way or another, learning from all; but it is seldom enough that a film bowls you over. *Zola* is one of the fine ones which begin as a film and end as an experience: like *Potemkin*, *Earth*, *Deserter*, *Aran*, *Pasteur* and, with all its faults, *The Good Earth*.

On the sweeping canvas of late nineteenth century France, Hollywood has staged in this life of *Zola* as dramatic a battle for truth as ever the cinema managed in fact or fiction. Most people will wonder how they came to be interested, but, considered as a form of expiation, there is good reason for its fire. No one would be more likely to appreciate the disintegration that goes on in the successful artist and the pains of the artist in the face of vested interests than the writers and directors of Hollywood.

The quality of the film derives from this feeling of secret autobiography and, of course, from Muni. As a piece of acting his account of the character of Zola is enormously skilled: jumping from age to age of the man; changing his gait, his speech, his idiosyncrasies, his mind: developing his literary character with such an uncanny sense of detail that, before we know it, we are facing a picture that so pleasantly reminds one of H. G. Wells that it cannot be far from the great Zola himself.

One sequence when Zola is a poor young man receiving his first fat cheque for *Nana*, is a most moving little patch of film acting, and heaven knows what with. Another, when Zola makes his defence of truth at the Dreyfus libel trial has the temerity to run eight hundred feet or so, or four times longer than the newsreels would allow our best political orators. Muni gets away with it. This I find queer enough. He has, at times, more annoying mannerisms than any actor I know, and this power of settling into the clothes of his character amounts almost to transubstantiation.

The principal theme of the story is not, as we have heard, the Dreyfus trial. Hollywood and its directors have taken deeper account of the writer himself: the progressive writer successful, finally complacent, shocked into the old fire by the political scandal which the Dreyfus case represented. Whatever the literary accuracy may be, it is a story that feels good all the way and in the great trial scene when judges act like curs and generals like jackals, it becomes, for a moment, majestic. A curious point is that Cézanne has been made the driving force of Zola's life. He appears as a much lighter figure than the bearded tough of the portraits and a more romantic figure than the fierce old psalmist Cézanne actually was; but let it be registered as the most bewildering thing of the year. Hollywood has paid this tribute to the man who, more than anyone in the last half century, despised everything that Hollywood stands for.

AS *Zola* is the goodness of Muni, *Knight Without Armour* is the anæmia of Marlene Dietrich; and it is the worst of big ambitious films that they magnify the central quality whatever it may be. *Knight Without Armour* is *comme ci comme ca* as they say in Wardour Street. It is said that Paramount has received the new Lubitsch film of Dietrich and, brilliant as it is, have to hold it up because of the slump in Dietrich's shares. After this and the *Garden of Allah* I would not wonder. In *Knight Without Armour* all that has been weak in Marlene—the tendency to pose, to become decorative, to make her femininity an end in itself, and, by complement, her increasing disrespect of every purpose but her own good looks—has brought her to the inevitable sticky end. I am sorry because Marlene, as anyone can see, has the material of great acting in her.

I am still sorrier for Feyder who made the film. Even under the handicap of an all-powerful Dietrich and, in Korda, a producer he did not understand, he has managed to convey the notion that he is, back of it all, a great director. See how he sets his atmosphere of Russian peasantry, how he manages the detail of his scenes, how superbly he manages a crowd, how colourful is the canvas of Russian revolution. Yet, however dominant are the distractions of Dietrich and brave the effort of Feyder, the picture is Donat's. He has the idiot role to play of a young Englishman who is required in the Russian troubles to commit every double-cross known to politics and every treachery known to common ethics and still be a hero. Somehow he contrives it and throws a dash of poetry in for good measure. As readers of this paper have found out, Donat is an uncommonly intelligent actor. Given the adverse circumstances of *Knight Without Armour*, he must now rate, in a quiet way, as a worker of miracles.

FLAHERTY, describing an actress who shall be nameless, is wont to say: "she *vends* herself." The description serves excellently for Dietrich and it is her tragedy. But, unless her intelligent husband Odets tells her so, it is also likely to be the tragedy of our dear Luise Rainer. Dietrich conceives herself as an image that men worship, but Luise Rainer is getting the notion that she is the image that men worship crucified. That is how it appears in *Big City*. In *The Good Earth* she appeared as the tortured figure of womanhood, and behind her were the hundreds of millions of Chinese men and women and the poverty and the sweat of brows the world over. For a symbol, the tortured figure passed. Married to the hearty figure of Spencer Tracy in *Big City* there is nothing, unless the woman is daft, to be so tortured about. Yet the gestures persist and more so: the old *rerum lacrimae* dithering down the wrong face in the wrong circumstances. It may be innocent, but it is still blasphemy.

For this and a dozen other reasons *Big City* is big nonsense with everything either too sweetly happy or too sickly sad and a plot which gets baby births mixed up with gangster wars and tragic deportations and is not about family life in warring China or warring Spain but only about New York. There is, however, a fight to delight you in the last reel. By itself, if you time it properly and miss the nonsense, it is worth the money. To clear up the gangsters, the film presents in person, in action, and often in character, almost every well-known fight, wrestling and ju jitsu champion in America; as though Hollywood had heard my plea for fighters against actors any day and had decided to act on it.

ARTHUR DENT, chief of Associated British distribution, has suddenly and, it seems, personally, presented us with *The World in Revolt*. It is an encyclopædiac account of all the fighters in all the countries: each in a piece so that when you have finished China you know you have to go on to Cuba and when you have finished Cuba you have to go on to Spain and so on, I am sorry to say,

**The Life of Emile Zola**
A Warner Brothers' film, directed by William Dieterle, with Paul Muni, Gloria Holden, Gale Sondergaard and Joseph Schildkraut.

**Knight Without Armour**
A London Films' production, directed by Jacques Feyder, with Robert Donat, Marlene Dietrich and John Clements.

**World in Revolt**
Distributed by Associated British.

# REVIEWED

## by Basil Wright

**Mr. Stringfellow says No**

An Incorporated Talking Films' picture, directed by Randall Faye, with Neil Hamilton and Claude Dampier.

**Big City**

An M.G.M. film, directed by Frank Borzage, with Luise Rainer, Spencer Tracy and Eddie Quillan.

for an hour and more like Raleigh, another optimist, writing the History of the World. The intention is honourable, the material for the most part magnificent, but you will have gathered from your encyclopædias that they tend to be lacking in creative line and dramatic shape.

Apart from this pain induced in a professional producer of documentaries by the amateur efforts of my friend Dent, I find the film of absorbing interest.

The scale of the world's struggle comes through, even if none of the essential underlying causes are explained. The intensity comes through, even if the sadness of it is ignored. The universality of it comes through, even if no appreciation of its common economic causes is revealed. The only thing I complain of is that the picture of peaceful, beautiful, complacent and fat-headed Britain is exaggerated. We are not as beautiful, as peaceful, as complacent, nor as fat-headed as Arthur Dent tells us, and as a sophisticated warrior of Wardour Street, he is a conscious old liar in saying so. Like the great salesman he is, he is obviously selling something, and no one need have three guesses to know what it is.

I make an even more personal complaint. Seven years ago Dent used to say to the documentary people who tried to sell him their masterworks: "Cut it down old boy . . . cut it in half . . . I'll take two hundred feet for *Pathe Pictorial*." And we wound our æsthetic robes sadly about us and left the husky old Shakespearian actor to his groceries. Imagine our mild surprise when the maestro in this first belated documentary attempt turns up with six thousand feet. I feel like repeating meanly the old refrain. "Cut it down old boy . . . cut it in half . . . I'll take two hundred feet for *Pathe Pictorial*." But in fact see it for the greatest collection of historic film material that has been made in our time. Encyclopædiac or no, it is unique.

In the increasingly monotonous jumble sale represented by the cinemas of this country, with the standard articles, well-worn, sometimes tattered, and clearly priced at quarter the production cost, pinned up on every stall, just occasionally a lucky dip into a penny ragbag is rewarded with an unexpected joy. Such is *Mr. Stringfellow says No*, which, as far as I am concerned, crept unheralded into the cinemas, and slunk out again entirely unobserved.

The reason, perhaps, is that it tends to the satirical, and satire, from the great days of Raymond (*Hands Up*) Griffiths, has seldom been a box-office success. Can it be that in satire the movies approach too near to raw reality? Or is it that there is an unwanted compulsion of thought arising from the director placing his tongue firmly in his cheek and keeping it there? "Orthodoxy," as Bishop Warburton remarked, "is my doxy: Heterodoxy is another man's doxy." And the great public, *au fond*, may prefer the simpler respectabilities.

The film is, in point of fact, too long, too full of loose ends, too meandering. But even in the most inchoate and unnecessary sequences, it usually throws up a flash of the sharper sort of fun. To begin with, it is a good story. A suburban young chap (a corporal in the Boy's Brigade, no less) is entangled in the deathbed of an international spy, whose car has crashed through the flimsy suburban house-wall. The spy, sending doctors and police from the room, announces he is about to reveal a vital secret—the very arcana which conceals the powers of peace and war. The young man (well played by Neil Hamilton) is made to swear a fearful oath of secrecy, and the spy promptly dies, having revealed nothing. None of the key-hole boys, however, will believe that the secret has gone to the grave, and the rest of the film devolves round the frantic efforts of foreign agents and the British Cabinet to extract it at all costs.

Presumably in order to cover up his satirical tracks, the director has added several sequences of pure thrill (cars, aeroplanes, parachutes) which fit the fantasy well enough, and other sequencies of low comedy, which fit it not so well (two up to Bishop Warburton).

The low comedy, incidentally, is supplied by the divine Claude Dampier, who could be made—preferably with a team-mate—into a first-line film comedian. But here his gorgeous inanities are wasted once again, and he is stuck onto the film—to use Cavalcanti's phrase—like a postage stamp.

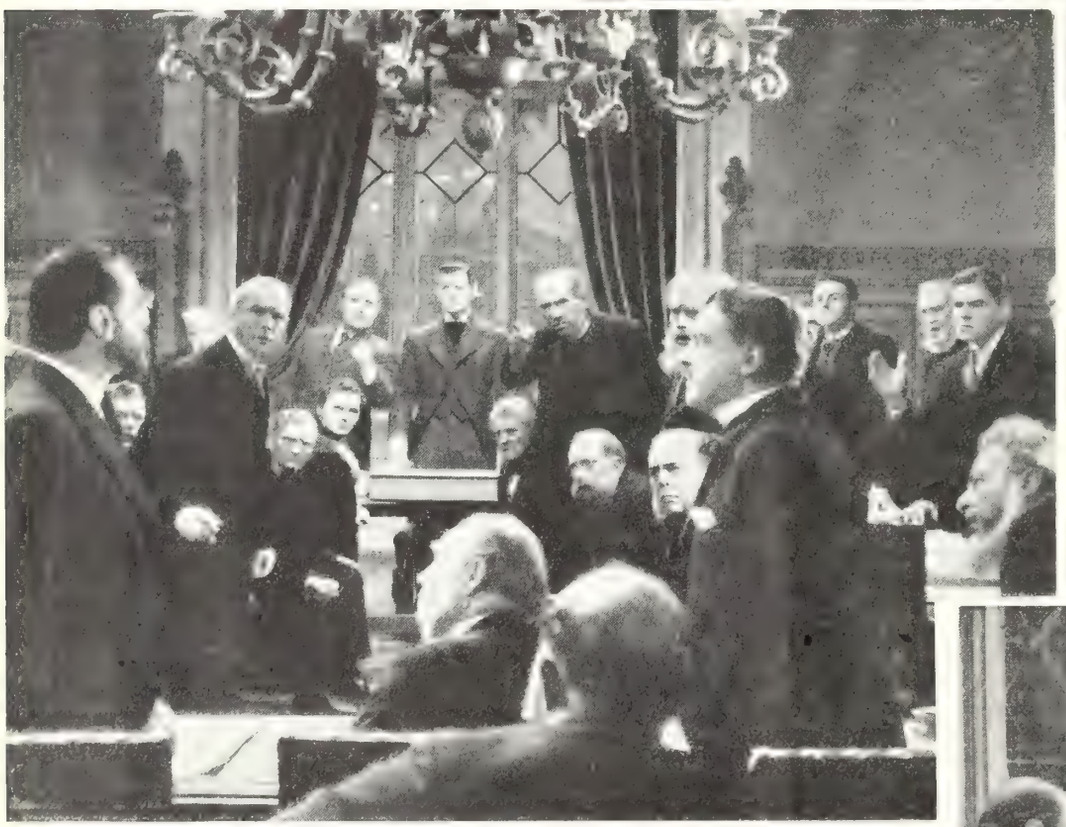
The loveliest moment in the film occurs in the Tower, where the young man is very properly incarcerated by order of the Prime Minister. Alarmed by rumours of impending execution, he is not unaverse to a friendly visit from a cultured beefeater in full uniform. In the course of a conversation about beheadings, he remarks to the beefeater—"Of course, they can't do that to me." "I shouldn't be too sure," says the beefeater—"That's what I thought"—On which he removes his head, and tucks it under his arm, where it continues an urbane and gentlemanly conversation. Brilliantly timed, this little sequence smacks out of the screen like a wind from another world. In similar vein, the address by the Prime Minister at an election meeting is based on many variants of the "Sealed-lips" theme, interrupted by blasts of "Colonel Bogey" from a completely uncontrollable brass band.

If the courageous originality of the film is due to the individual efforts of Randall Faye, who directed, he deserves a vote of thanks from everyone who prefers panache to pancakes, and an apology from everyone else for the bitter fact that the film was not a box-office success. True, it needed the scissors, and didn't get them. But equally true it is that it had the goods and few would take delivery.

Returning to the more ordinary aspects of the rummage sale, the eye is caught by *Big City*, if only because it combines two stock plots which are usually kept carefully separate—the tough slapstick of near-gangsterdom and the treacly sentimentality of a Borzage. And thereby hangs a tale,for Borzage directed. The film begins grandly—as is true of any film starring Spencer Tracy—but after fifteen minutes of humour and savagery, the mush creeps in, and Borzage reverts solidly to type for several reels. The last reel, however, which is devoted to the smashing of a number of tough taxi-drivers by the Sporting Club of New York (including Joe Beckett, Jack Johnson, the Man-Mountain and many others—all in the flesh) makes up for all else, and is brilliantly shot and cut. What matter if Luise Rainer is very privately having a baby in the nearby ambulance, thus regrettably keeping Spencer Tracy out of the fight? It at least gives us a chance to forget what Borzage rams at us throughout the rest of the film—that she is a great actress. After *The Good Earth* this attempt at versatility falls very flat, and she should be referred back to a certain remark of Pythagoras—"Do not devour thy heart." Least of all, we may add, in cold blood, in front of a movie camera, and for five reels.

# "UNCROWNED KING OF IRELAND"

**Charles Stewart Parnell, subject of the M.G.M. film released this month**



*Above:* Clark Gable as Parnell and Myrna Loy as Katie O'Shea. Though Gable gives a sincere performance he is clearly unsuited to the part.

*Left:* Meeting of the Irish Party at which the demand for Parnell's resignation causes a split.

*Below:* The dying Parnell urges his countrymen to continue the fight for Home Rule. The split, however, has weakened the Irish Party, and Home Rule does not appear again as a strong issue until just before the Great War.

More and more the movies turn to serious themes, adding enlightenment to entertainment as in *Pasteur*, *Zola* and *Parnell*.

*Parnell* is an account of the years 1880–1891, the years of Parnell's greatest public influence; his triumphant vindication in the case of the Piggott forgeries, which brought Home Rule within reach; and his dramatic fall.

In 1880 he had fallen in love with the wife of Captain O'Shea. The Captain's divorce proceedings in 1890 made the affair public and shocked British Liberal opinion. The consequent demand for Parnell's resignation split the Irish Party, cost him his leadership, and, it is said, postponed Irish Home Rule.

# GUIDE to NOVEMBER RELEASES

**MAKE WAY FOR TO-MORROW** ★ ★
(*Paramount*) *Victor Moore, Beulah Bondi, Fay Bainter, Thomas Mitchell and Barbara Read.*

First-rate performances by Victor Moore and Beulah Bondi distinguish this drama of an old couple who become a nuisance to their grown-up families. Unable to fit into the lives of these younger families, conscious of being in the way, they leave; the mother to the Home for the Aged, the father to distant California.

Brilliant direction by Leo McCarey lends delicacy and genuine tragedy.

**I MET HIM IN PARIS**
(*Paramount*) *Claudette Colbert, Robert Young and Melvyn Douglas.*

Bright and light comedy in which Claudette Colbert, en route for Paris, meets Robert Young and Melvyn Douglas, and joins them on a holiday in Switzerland. Robert Young is already married so Douglas gets Colbert after some amusing situations, helped on by good dialogue and able direction by Wesley Ruggles. Opening is slow, but picture gathers impetus towards the end. Good acting and direction ably covers up thin story.

**UNDER THE RED ROBE**
(*20th Century-Fox*) *Conrad Veidt, Annabella, Raymond Massey, Romney Brent, Sophie Stewart.*

Swashbuckling costume drama with Conrad Veidt as Gil de Berault and Annabella as Lady Marguerite.

**CALL IT A DAY**
(*Warner Bros.*) *Ian Hunter, Alice Brady, Frieda Inescourt, Roland Young, Olivia de Havilland, Peggy Wood, Anita Louise.*

Film version of Dodie Smith's West End success. Entertaining comedy showing Spring affecting an ornately housed English suburban family. Every rôle competently filled by an excellent cast.

**SARATOGA**
(*Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer*) *Jean Harlow, Clark Gable, Lionel Barrymore, Frank Morgan.*

Racing comedy-drama, partly filmed with a substitute for Harlow, whose death occurred before the picture was completed. The tricked and fabricated parts emphasize how vivid and striking a personality the screen has lost. Picture has little life when Harlow is off the screen.

**FAREWELL AGAIN** ★ ★
(*London Films*) *Leslie Banks, Flora Robson, Robert Newton, Maire O'Neill, Robert Cochran.*

Based on real-life incident. Soldiers return to England after years of foreign service and are ordered abroad again after six hours in dock. Film takes several characters of various ranks in the regiment, and shows the meaning of those precise six hours to each. Each man has his own domestic problems, tragic or humorous; made touchingly human. Entire cast, down to those who speak but a few lines, give sincere and appealing performances. Worthy of notice because it brings a real incident to the screen and makes it convincing and entertaining.

**MARKED WOMAN**
(*Warner-First National*) *Bette Davis, Humphrey Bogart, Eduardo Cianelli, Isabel Jewell.*

Takes you behind the scenes of the night clubs owned and controlled by gangsters. Story of the beautiful girls who serve as hostesses in these night-clubs, tools of the big time racketeers. Humphrey Bogart appears this time as crusader of the law and Eduardo Cianelli is the chief racketeer. Bette Davis as one of the night club girls gives one of her best performances. Good acting, tense situations and plenty of vivid incident.

**WOMAN CHASES MAN**
(*United Artists*) *Miriam Hopkins, Joel McCrea, Charles Winninger, Erik Rhodes.*

Crazy story reversing the position of stern, wealthy father and ne'er-do-well son to erratic father and practical son. Director John Blystone makes the most of available material, but chief honours go to Miriam Hopkins. Special for Hopkins fans.

**THE EMPEROR'S CANDLESTICKS**
(*Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer*) *William Powell, Luise Rainer, Robert Young, Maureen O'Sullivan, Frank Morgan.*

Old story about international spies, with the world shattering documents hidden this time in a pair of candlesticks. The candlesticks are stolen and the resulting chase across Europe by spies Rainer and Powell to reclaim their communications, is the chief action and interest part of this unreal pre-war drama.

The charm of the two stars, with the help of an excellent supporting cast, helps to redeem the picture. Directed with more care than the story merits, by George Fitzmaurice.

**STORM IN A TEACUP** ★ ★
(*London Films*) *Vivien Leigh, Rex Harrison, Cecil Parker, Sara Allgood.*

Unusual and amusing comedy of a pompous Provost of a small Scots community, his attractive daughter and an independent English reporter.

Story shows reporter puncturing vanity of Provost by arousing the sympathy of the community, for local Irishwoman's dog which has been seized for non-payment of license. Leads up to excellent courtroom scene, reminiscent of the *Mr. Deeds*' pixilated sequence, and after some amusing incidents, boy gets girl and dog gets freedom.

Good cast extracts full quota of humour from neat dialogue.

**THE DEVIL IS DRIVING**
(*Columbia*) *Richard Dix, Joan Perry, Nana Bryant, Frank C. Wilson.*

Indictment against drunken driving, pointed particularly to the class most able to buy perjuring witnesses. Picture carries good deal of punch, mixing politics, society and family life of the poor. Powerful court scene when Dix, as D.A., indicts himself, to expose political grafters. Worth seeing.

**THE ROAD BACK**
(*Universal*) *John King, Richard Cromwell, "Slim" Summerville, Andy Devine, Barbara Read.*

Record of lives of group of young German soldiers seeking road back to life after spending four years in trenches. Not as harsh and bitter as Remarque's novel but contains many memorable moments. Richard Cromwell and John Emery turn in best acting jobs. At times impressive drama with courageous ending.

**WAKE UP AND LIVE**
(*20th Century-Fox*) *Walter Winchell, Ben Bernie.*

Lively musical, based on radio rivalry between two actual prople, Walter Winchell, New York Columnist, and Ben Bernie, band leader. Fast-moving, entertaining comedy.

**HIS AFFAIR**
(*20th Century-Fox*) *Robert Taylor, Barbara Stanwyck, Victor McLaglen.*

Period melodrama of America fifty years ago. Story deals with secret mission entrusted to young naval lieutenant to discover indentity of man behind widespread series of bank robberies. Plenty of excitement.

# *Review of the Month*

## *Victoria the Great*

(Herbert Wilcox—Radio).
Anna Neagle, Anton Walbrook.

To do justice to the picture it must first be admitted that some of its success is due to novelty and some to curiosity. Whilst the lifting of the prohibition on representations of Queen Victoria remains recent the mere portrayal of her, whether on stage or screen, has an interest not intrinsically connected with history or histrionics. We are seeing something we have not been allowed to see. Later generations may perhaps interpret the reign of Victoria, with the Monarch taking her rightful place in it. To-day it is too early, and it is, further, apparently too early for Victoria to be expressed. In the film, as in the plays at the Lyric, the most that can be done is to represent her. The most that we, as audience, can hope is that, since she is an historical figure, the history will not be too flagrantly falsified.

The film, again like the plays, avoids this by keeping history in the background. Naturally, the position of the Queen and her husband entails that many of their actions have passed into history and can be neither altered nor ignored. We see, as it were, the familiar stories enacted. There is talk of affairs of State, of India, and of America, and *Victoria the Great* even goes as far as including the Corn Laws among its anecdotes. But all this somehow remains talk. We have no feeling of the England behind the Throne, of the country beyond Buckingham Palace, or of the colonies beyond the country. This, at the moment, is too much for either play or picture to tackle; author, actress, and director limit themselves to the portrayal of the Queen.

The portrait is inevitably made superficial by this limitation. It seems also a reproduction more than an original. Here in the film we have the same scenes and the same events, somewhat episodically strung together. The film is less episodic than might be imagined and that is one of its merits. Against that must be put the constant use of subtitles explaining dates and environments. English filmgoers are liable to recognise Windsor at sight; these blackboard captions give the impression that the film is designed to instruct larger audiences in the rudiments of nineteenth-century English history, and once we feel that we become aware of a simplification of the theme. But throughout the course of the picture we are strongly aware of sobriety in its handling. We appreciate the official assistance given to its making and approve, in the main, of the dialogue.

Anna Neagle approaches her rôle assured of a respect created by her previous hard work. At first she appears unsuited in stature to represent the Queen, and it seems that camera angles are chosen so as not to place too great a strain on her acting. But she manages to deliver the line "We are not amused" as a retort and not as a tag, and in general does all that is required and all that is allowed by the script. She is surrounded by an excellent cast, which includes C. V. France, Anton Walbrook (as Prince Albert), H. B. Warner, Felix Aylmer, Lewis Casson and many others.

**"Influenced the public welfare . . ."**

All these fall dutifully into line in relating how the married life of the Monarch happily influenced the public welfare of her country, and when the film blazes into Technicolour for the last reel there is no denying the vividness of its message that the Queen was regarded and is to be remembered as the mother of many races.

—R. H., *The Manchester Guardian*

I found *Victoria the Great* a good show. Its interest held. It was well directed, well photographed. More than that, its subordinate rôles were admirably played. Some parts of the film fascinated. Some enthralled. None was boring. But the picture does not compare with Laurence Housman's play. *Victoria the Great* shows her in the right. It does not mention any of the cases in which she was wrong. Nor, frankly, does it explain the dominance of her character. Still, we must all remember that Victoria's reign was so long, and her experiences so numerous, that no play, no book, no film, could do justice to all sides of a personality that had a profound influence on the life, not only of Britain but, indeed, of the whole world. —Hannen Swaffer, *The People*

It has often been observed that anybody taking his notion of the history of the time from the novels of Jane Austen would remain ignorant of Trafalgar and Waterloo. The makers of *Victoria the Great* resemble Jane Austen in that they give us no notion whatever of the England over which Victoria ruled, except for one shot depicting a rabble demanding the repeal of the Corn Laws.

—James Agate, *The Tatler*

*Critical Summary.*

*It would seem that a director, like a prophet, is not without honour. . . The rapturous applause given to this film in Venice and in New York was not altogether echoed by critics in this country. Some were enthusiastic, some non-committal, some merely sniffed. But no historical film or play will ever please everyone, least of all when it deals with recent events. As the portrait of an age, and perhaps the most remarkable age in our history, "Victoria the Great" remains largely incomplete and uninformative, although it admittedly seems doubtful whether any one film could hope to deal with so vast a subject and yet remain entertainment. And undeniably this is good entertainment, an historical romance in the film tradition, and notable, at least, for the fact that it is an English picture which has most successfully invaded the American market.*

## *Dead End*

(William Wyler—United Artists).
Sylvia Sidney, Joel McCrea, Humphrey Bogart.

I think Miss Hellman's adaptation is extremely sensible, and the result is a fine, showy, exciting movie, more ambitious by far than the average movie of underworld and of life on New York streets and river front. The play, however, as I remember it, was unusual in the theatre. The exact language of the boys was remarkable in itself, and the manufactured illusion of the dock added a kind of circus element of surprise to the production. The nursery decorum of the movies has toned down the repartee of the boys, and the the richest and most careful photography of wharves, tenements, and adjoining palazzos can hardly seem striking to us by this time. The play was novel and special, but the film, excellent as it is, fits into the pigeon-hole of underworld movies, possibly ranking there even with *Winterset*. Altogether, the picture—incidentally a protest against reform schools and their curricula—becomes one of the handsome films of our city's lowest life, and one of the most exciting of them.

—John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

Samuel Goldwyn's screen transcription of *Dead End* deserves a place among the important motion pictures of 1937 for its stout and well-presented reiteration of the social protest that was the theme of the original Sidney Kingsley stage play. As a picture of life in an East River dead end street, where hopeless squalor rubs daily against Sutton Place elegance with no more salutary effect on either than mutual irritation, it is again an arresting, inductive consideration of the slum problem, a prima facie case for a revision of the social system. As a motion picture, however, it has technical faults, mainly its rigid adherence to the physical form of the play (seemingly a much too frugal use of so mobile an instrument as the camera), and its reshaping of of the play's pivotal character to make him conform to the accepted cinema hero type. But in spite of these relatively unimportant failings (both can be convincingly defended), the story of the frustrations and rebellions of the underprivileged people of *Dead End* has been brought smoothly and forcefully to the screen by an admirable cast.

—J. T. M., *The New York Times*

**"Squalor rubs against elegance . . ."**

## *Café Metropole*

(Edward H. Griffith—20th Century-Fox).
Loretta Young, Tyrone Power, Adolphe Menjou.

Lightly, gaily and impudently, *Café Metropole* upsets the old axiom that "honesty is the best policy" as surely as does M. Guitry's satirical essay on a kindred subject. For Victor, manager of a fashionable Parisian restaurant, has been helping himself to loans from the cash-box, and proposes to make good the deficit out of the pocket of his richest client, a New York magnate. In the person of Adolphe Menjou Victor is such a plausible rogue, so dexterous in wriggling out of tight corners, so courteous and entertaining, that we can applaud his audacity and success. *Café Metropole* is decidedly Menjou's picture, charmingly decorated though it is by Loretta Young, and strengthened by Charles Winninger and Helen Westley's excellent comedy. The director handles a complicated story adroitly, though some of the situations are prolonged beyond the strength of the play's brittle but often sparkling fabric.

—Michael Orme, *The Sketch*

When a film has Adolphe Menjou in one of the best bits of work he has done for some time, lovely Loretta Young, in the modern character which suits her so much more than costume rôles, and that amazing young man, Tyrone Power, grabbing a dozen more rungs in his rapid ascent of the ladder of success, it must be good. But this film also has a not-too-stale idea, some very bright dialogue, and admirable good-humoured direction. So it comes, more or less unheralded, as one of the most attractive comedies of the year. Tyrone is forced to pose as a Russian prince to lure an American heiress, with whom, of course, he falls in love. The advent of the real Russian prince (played by Gregory Ratoff, who wrote the original story) complicates the comedy, which is acted with finesse and spirit by all concerned.

—A. Jympson Harman, *The Evening News*

## *A Star is Born*

(William A. Wellman—Selznick International).
Janet Gaynor, Fredric March, Adolphe Menjou.

No apology need be made for referring once again to this picture in these columns. It begins badly and it ends badly, which is not unusual even in a good picture, for Hollywood can seldom resist that final superfluous touch. But for all that it is a notable film, and notable not merely because it is in colour and the colour is for once unnoticed; not merely because it is unusual, presenting an aspect of Hollywood not often seen; not merely because it is bitter, and cynical and tender all at the same time; but because here, for once, is a picture almost perfectly cast, written with understanding, sincerity and a real sense of character, well acted in all its parts except one, and that one a memorable performance indeed. Fredric March will never do anything better than this portrayal of a falling star. This is not tragedy, but it is yet something strangely moving and sad, and all the more so because he has deliberately underplayed the scenes which a lesser actor would have over dramatised, and has therefore given them an added power. It may be that we shall not see a better performance in 1937.

—H. E. B., *World Film News*

### W.F.N. Selection

| | |
|---|---|
| *The Life of Emile Zola* | * * * |
| *Dead End* | * * |
| *Mr. Stringfellow Says No** | |
| *Big City* | * |
| *Knight Without Armour* | * |
| *Victoria the Great* | * |
| *The Prisoner of Zenda* | * |
| *Le Roman d'un Tricheur* | * |

### *Films Covered in this Issue*

*Café Metropole*

*A Star is Born*

*Broadway Melody of* 1938

*Gangway*

*Non-stop New York*

## *Broadway Melody of 1938*

(Roy Del Ruth—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer).
Robert Taylor, Eleanor Powell.

Historians will remember that two Broadways back we were all talking about this Taylor boy, and speculating as to whether or not he would last the pace. In the new version he has very little to do; he belongs to the story, but he does not belong to the dance routines and the singing numbers which make up most of the picture. So he pops in and out gracefully, at times a little amused at such odd surroundings. Miss Powell, who was virtually an unknown two years ago, dances with her customary vigour and grace. I think she has more charm than any other screen musical comedy star. There are some pleasant supporting performances by people like Robert Benchley, and Sophie Tucker, whose genius is revered by everyone living except myself, lends that furious voice of hers. Fifteen-year-old Judy Garland, who is evidently a minor Tucker, gives vent in somewhat similar manner. I suggest that Miss Garland's owners or parents either have her taught to sing melodiously, or not at all. It is terrible to think that a new generation of hot mommas is being trained to succeed the old.

—Connery Chappell, *The Sunday Dispatch*

To coincide with the arrival of "Emperor" Taylor in our town, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer have sent his latest film *Broadway Melody of* 1938. There is nothing in this egregious production to support the widespread propaganda that His Imperial Majesty is directly descended from the Sun. He makes only brief and insignificant appearances, interludes of dullness between displays of talent by such various artistes as Sophie Tucker and Eleanor Powell. There is one shot specially designed for his millions of female subjects; a picture of the Imperial mouth engaged in a particularly succulent osculation—so close did the camera approach at this intimate moment, that if the screen were a map of the World on Mercator's projection, Mr. Taylor's pendulous lower-lip would cover the whole of the U.S. and half the Atlantic Ocean. But this kiss is all he contributes to the entertainment value of the film.

—*Truth*

*Critical Summary.*

*Heaven—and certainly Fleet Street—forbid that this department should ever take it into its head to criticize, as well as to compile, the work of the critics, but the case of Robert Taylor does provide an excuse to remind some writers that it is the duty of a critic to express opinions and not complexes. The private life of a star has nothing whatsoever to do with his work on the screen, and the fact that Robert Taylor was mobbed by hysterical women on his arrival in this country provides no commentary on his acting ability.*

## *Gangway*

(Sonnie Hale—Gaumont-British).

Jessie Matthews, Barry Mackay, Nat Pendleton.

Jessie Matthews, who lost some ground with her last film, recovers it in this lively musical, in which the tempo is so snappy that the Atlantic dwindles to a ditch. Jessie's whimsical flair for a comedy situation; the instinctive charm which she brings to every emergency, whether it be song, dance, or dialogue, and the intuitive grace of her moments of repose, even when merely listening, combine to make an irresistible onslaught of wistful and winsome femininity. Sonnie Hale wrote the ingenious story and directed the picture, which flatters Hollywood technique more than anything produced in our studios this year.

—G. A. Atkinson, *The Sunday Referee*

**"Charm to every emergency . . ."**

## URGES SCHOOL EQUIPMENT

Kenneth Lindsay, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, deplored, in opening the London Film School, a summer course at the University of London, that only 810 schools out of 32,000 in the British Isles had film projectors, against 17,000 in Germany, 10,097 in the U.S.A. and 9,400 in France.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## *Gangway* (*Continued*)

*Gangway* presents Miss Jessie Matthews as a girl reporter—to be exact, an "Asst. Film Critic"—who tracks down an international jewel thief by singing and dancing. Miss Matthews dances her way to America and catches the criminal, in the sort of refined romp that England obviously supposes that America thinks that English films should be. Oh, by the way, there's a joke in the title, if you look at it attentively. You can read it Gangway—like that, one word—or Gang Way—like that, two words. It's only a small point—not serious, really. But one might as well give credit where credit is due.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

## *Non-Stop New York*

(Robert Stevenson—Gaumont-British).
John Loder, Anna Lee, Francis Sullivan, Frank Cellier, Desmond Tester.

Robert Stevenson will mean much to the reputation of British films if he goes on like this. *Non-Stop New York* proves him to be a cunning assimilator of the best Hollywood traditions in direction. It is a film as admirably compounded of comedy and thrills, as confidently and expertly directed and as slickly produced as you could wish. We have the stars, we have the stories, and clearly it is the swift touch of a right-minded director that is needed to put British thrillers in a modern setting on a level with the first-quality American products in this *genre*. The film takes wings, literally and figuratively, yet the twists of plot are never obscure, nor too involved. Airway dramas we have seen in plenty, but this shows better grasp than most of just what can be done with a well-assorted lot of characters sitting up aloft. There may be nothing very new at any point, but it is all so slickly treated as to seem new, which is all that matters. All the parts are very well played, and the whole of the thrills and the laughter are neatly dovetailed together with touches of finesse that leave no room for tedium.

—*The Birmingham Mail*

## *Knight Without Armour*

(Jacques Feyder—London Films).
Marlene Dietrich, Robert Donat, John Clements.

When the study of hokum has been a little further advanced it will be possible to say whether Mr. James Hilton's story or Mr. Korda's film of it is the most artistic. For the moment there must be some in favour of Mr. Korda's star crossing of lovers and revised ending, and others who prefer Mr. Hilton's own understatement and faux-relentlessness. Miss Dietrich looks nice occasionally and, when bathing, positively alluring, but she never gets within miles of the character. Mr. Donat acts the Englishman as before, very decently but monotonously. The smaller parts are better conceived and better done too. A mad station-master signalling unseen trains is brilliant. The technical qualities are remarkable for an English film. The trains look like trains, snow like snow and a Russian country house is just what one expects it to be. The director is M. Jacques Feyder who made *Kermesse Héroïque*. Although this is not by any means a first-rate film, the direction, the technique and the story make it well worth seeing.

—*The New Statesman and Nation*

**"Just a Movie . . ."**

British agent caught in the Russian revolution saves countess. Donat and Dietrich. Some exciting action, some snotty attitudes. Preserves "impartiality" on the revolution by caricaturing the whites as ice-blooded aristos, by caricaturing the reds as swinish palace-looters. Rather offensive at times, but manages to remain just a movie.

—Meyer Levin, *Esquire*

*Critical Summary.*

*Everyone agreed that this picture was well made and good entertainment. Similarly nearly everyone agreed that it was a disappointment. So much had been expected of it, with two famous stars directed by one whose previous work had been acclaimed as being of quite exceptional merit. Miss Dietrich, exquisitely photographed, was found by one critic to be guilty at times of "unpardonable complacence," and another regretted that Robert Donat's talent for comedy had unfortunately to be ignored. Indeed the picture came perilously near to being stolen by John Clements, who received the warmest praise from all sides for his portrait of the tragic young commissar. But altogether a great deal of trouble seems to have been taken over something really not quite worth it. Or as Miss Lejeune remarked "it seems to me a pity to have taken a whale of a story and turned it, at such expense, too, into a sole bonne femme."*

## *The Prisoner of Zenda*

(John Cromwell—Selznick International).
Ronald Colman, Madeleine Carroll, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., Mary Astor.

Certainly this is one of the best things in its class. They throw in everything but the War of the Roses and elephants, and if you were to question the producers on the probability of any one scene they would take you for someone from the Department of International Revenue; yet once the story is accepted, you can see how they have worked at it with sincerity and scrupulous care, treating its hokum almost with dignity. Ronald Colman in the main double rôle is one reason why the scenes are built into credibility; and Madeleine Carroll as Flavia is another reason, though it is unfortunate that anyone so lovely should occasionally suggest Ann Harding; Douglas Fairbanks Jr. makes a good ornamental rogue; and C. Aubrey Smith is there for background. (Raymond Massey, if I were running the show, would speak all his lines with his back to the camera, through an interpreter). So the young king is saved from himself and his brother, love is renounced and the national welfare invoked, and Zenda lives again, if any.

—Otis Ferguson, *The New Republic*

**"A good ornamental rogue . . ."**

With all the Graustarkian punctilio this corner can muster up, we rise, click our heels, toast the Selznick International production of *The Prisoner of Zenda* and smash the glass. Here is proper, swashbuckling adventure, set in that vast mythical land (of which Zenda is a province) where honour is brighter, villainy unregenerate and beauty incomparable. Here is pomp and circumstance so intricately woven into the story that every measured pace of it simply bristles with excitement. Here is grand characterization, tastefully expensive production and direction that seeks out dramatic values in everything. Here is the most pleasing film that has come along in ages. The trick photography wherewith the two Rudolfs are shown together is so convincing that this reviewer believed, until he was corrected by someone in the know, that one or the other of the Rudolfs was a double.

—J. T. M., *The New York Times*

## *Le Roman d'un Tricheur*

(Sacha Guitry—French).
Sacha Guitry, Jacqueline Delubac.

M. Sacha Guitry was delighting French audiences in the theatre some years before the film, as we know it, was born, and it is therefore all the more surprising to find him taking this new medium in his stride, and indeed giving the cinema a notable lesson in originality. Even the tedious details of cast, technicians and the rest, which the filmgoer accepts as a necessary prelude to a film, take on a new interest in his hands as he allows his camera to wander casually round the studio and introduces us with engaging intimacy to his staff as they are discovered at their work. M. Guitry himself, as the cheat who gives to the film its title, is discovered in reminiscent mood seated at a table outside a café, and armed with pen and ink preparatory to writing his adventurous biography, and he it is who provides the film with its illuminating, philosophical and almost racy commentary, while the characters themselves remain silent. The history of the cheat is traced from earliest youth through various stages of uncertain integrity as page-boy, soldier, Casino croupier, gambler and man of the world until, with the final triumphant writing of "Fin" to the last page of his memoirs with the café's rather scratchy pen, he brings the film to a close. Regretfully we leave him to gossip with the waiter over his wine, having spent a most enjoyable hour in his company. We have chuckled delightedly throughout, as much intrigued by his experiences as by his refusal to accept the unimaginative formalities of the cinema.

—*The Times*

# PEOPLE OF THE STUDIOS

## ● Great Britain

### Denham

Latest addition to the M.G.M.-British production staff is Victor Saville, forty-year-old director and producer. His first subject for the company will be Dr. A. J. Cronin's exposure of medical graft, *The Citadel*, rights of which he won in a bidding contest with Hollywood companies. Donat may get the top spot, other engagements permitting.

One-time renter and exhibitor, Saville joined up with Gaumont-British in 1920, directing silents. Talkies include *Michael and Mary*, *I Was a Spy*, *The Good Companions*, *Friday the 13th* and *The Dictator*. Last year he became associate producer to Korda, making *Dark Journey*, *Storm in a Teacup* and *Action for Slander*.

One of M.G.M.'s five pictures scheduled for London production will be *And So Victoria*, lengthy novel by William Vaughn Wilkins. Rumoured also that Garbo will star in another—for some time she has been desirous of making films in this country due to its proximity to her native land, and the recent differences she has had with her company over story material may bring matters to a head. Meantime *A Yank at Oxford* holds the floor with Griffith Jones and Vivien Leigh supporting Robert Taylor and Maureen O'Sullivan. Elmer Dyer, ace aerial photographer, has been shooting location backgrounds for *Shadow of the Wing* which follows, and R. C. Sheriff has been signed up to script P. C. Wren's *Spur of Pride* and Remarque's *Three Comrades*. Taylor has his eye on the latter, hoping to steer clear of *Broadway Melodies* in the future.

Jack Hulbert's musical went through a title-changing epidemic when in quick succession it was re-christened *Playboy*, *Kiss Me Goodnight* and *Paradise for Two*. Latter title now holds.

Sam Goldwyn and Walter Wanger, oldest and newest of United Artists' producers, are contemplating production at Denham. Goldwyn plans a *Follies* subject in Technicolour, and Wanger contemplates two pictures—one a musical, the other a wise-cracking comedy.

* * *

In our September issue, on the information of a usually reliable correspondent, we published a paragraph to the effect that we had heard that technical troubles in the Denham Laboratories had caused delay to productions, necessitating reshooting of certain sections, and that these troubles were being investigated.

We have received from Solicitors acting on behalf of Denham Laboratories, Limited, a letter in which they inform us that the statements are untrue, and that the few technical adjustments which might be expected to be necessary at the commencement of the Laboratory's commercial working were disposed of six months ago, also, that at no time had any technical trouble caused delays to productions nor had any reshooting to be done.

In these circumstances we express our apologies to Denham Laboratories Limited for any wrong impressions our paragraph may have created.

### Pinewood

The industry has discovered Gilbert and Sullivan, and the D'Oyly Carte Company has parted with film rights of the operas. The General Cinema Finance Corporation has formed a special unit for production of the operas, first of which will be *Yeoman of the Guard*, to be made at Pinewood and distributed by G.F.D. No cast yet fixed.

* * *

Wendy Hiller, Manchester-born actress who helped to steer *Love on the Dole* through the theatrical depression, gets the lead in the Paramount British picture *Lancashire Luck*, with George Carney. Story is by Ronald Gow, who collaborated with Walter Greenwood on *Love on the Dole*. Henry Cass is directing.

John Paddy Carstairs directs *Incident in Shanghai*, story of the Sino-Japanese war. Janet Johnson is starring.

*Break the News*, current Jack Buchanan picture, marks M. René Clair's return to musical comedy. Music and lyrics are by American composer Cole Porter, of *Gay Divorce* and *Born to Dance*, sets are the work of Lazare Meerson, responsible for those in *La Kermesse Héroïque* and *Knight Without Armour;* stars are Jack Buchanan from England, Maurice Chevalier from France, June Knight from America. Adele Astaire, formerly in Miss Knight's role, bowed out after story difficulties.

After an arduous year actor-producer-director Buchanan is on Broadway in *Between the Devil* with Evelyn Laye. In the last nine months he has concluded his stage show *This'll Make You Whistle*, organised his own production company, directed the production of three pictures and starred in two.

### Elstree

Charles Laughton has returned to Elstree, once England's Hollywood, to play Ginger Ted, a drunken beachcomber, in Somerset Maugham's *Vessel of Wrath*. Elsa Lanchester is the missionary and Tyrone Guthrie her brother. Exterior scenes were shot in the South of France, where a South Sea Jungle was constructed on the edge of the sea.

Picture is Bartlett Cormack's first directorial effort. Educated at Chicago University, Cormack has been journalist, stock company actor, company manager, press agent, playwright and script-writer. Currently he is working on a cavalcade of Fleet Street inspired by the closing down of "The Morning Post," in which Charles Laughton will play the editor of a paper which liquidates after a long and glorious history. Cormack was associated with Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur when they were newspapermen in Chicago, and was responsible for the screenplays of their *Front Page*, and for *Gentlemen of the Press*, two newspaper stories. *Fury* was his biggest writing effort.

* * *

First picture on the new A.B.P. programme is *The Terror*, Edgar Wallace thriller to be Richard Bird's first job of directing.

### Teddington

As a consolation for theatrical sentimentalists who mourn the passing of the Alhambra and Daly's in Leicester Square, fittings, panellings and familiar objects in the latter house will be preserved at Teddington for use in pictures with theatrical backgrounds. Other bronzes, paintings and statuary from the old theatre will be included in the new Warner Cinema erected on the site.

Not included in our list of foreign executives in the "Flora and Fauna" article of our September issue was American-born Mr. Jerry Jackson, chief associate producer and second in command to Mr. Asher for the past three years. To his credit goes the introduction to films of Max Miller, one of Teddington's successes.

Irving Asher is enthusing over twenty-two-year-old Aino Bergo, of Swedish origin, who was spotted by a Warner scout in a German film *Paradise Women*. After a spot of grooming she will be exported to the company's larger studios in Hollywood, where Mr. Asher's last discovery, Errol Flynn, has justified the faith that was put in him.

### Elsewhere

At St. Margaret's Studio Julius Hagen is delivering quota product for M.G.M. First scheduled is James Ronald's novel, *Death Croons the Blues*.

Tom Walls has Jane Baxter as leading lady in *Second Best Bed*, new Ben Travers comedy at Sound City. Title is taken from Shakespeare's will: "I give unto my wife my second best bed."

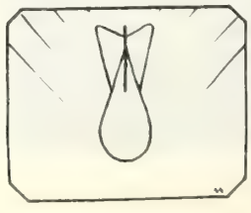
After more than a year's inactivity Paul Soskin's unit starts up again with a two-picture line-up for British Lion release. First is John Buchan's *Huntingtower*, now shooting at Beaconsfield.

## ● America

### 20th Century-Fox

Hollywood is doing a Sino-Japanese war-dance. Taking advantage of the current news-interest, Darryl Zanuck, Fox Chief, got away first with *Shanghai Deadline*, new title for *International Settlement*, which started production a week or two back. Now Radio have started *North of Shanghai;* Warners have changed the title of *War Lord*, Boris Karloff picture, to *West of Shanghai;* Paramount are re-issuing *Shanghai Express* and have taken Robert Florey off a Gladys Swarthout musical to direct Anna May Wong in *Daughter of Shanghai*, because he had lately been in Japan collecting material for *Madame Butterfly*.

Zanuck had been worried for some months by Gregory Ratoff's plea to direct, as the latter's story ideas seemed more valuable. Finally the Fox boss tossed him the toughest assignment he had—Ratoff's own story *Shanghai Deadline*—and expected him to throw it over. But Ratoff took



on the job, and Zanuck now wants him to forget the writing and stick to direction. Stars in the picture are Cesar Romero, Virginia Fields, June Lang and Peter Lorre.

## Radio

Judging by reports of *Stage Door*, big bow should be taken by director Gregory La Cava who has created a new Hepburn, made a promising actress of Ginger Rogers, and guided Andrea Leeds to stardom. Picture is drawing big money in the States.

The Marx Brothers have signed a contract for three pictures with Radio, first of which will be *Room Service*. £55,000 has been paid for the rights of the play.

Cost of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, new Disney feature-length cartoon, has exceeded $1,100,000 to date. Release is expected some time in December, and Disney gets down to another feature, *Bambi*.

Katharine Hepburn now steps into *Bringing Up Baby* with Cary Grant as leading man, and Miss Rogers, after polishing off *Vivacious Lady* which was postponed owing to James Stewart's illness, starts *Having Wonderful Time*. Douglas Fairbanks Jr. has been contracted for male interest, and returns to the RKO lot for the first time in three years.

Meanwhile Fred Astaire concentrates on *A Damsel in Distress* which George Stevens is directing. George Burns, Gracie Allen, and English orchestra-leader Ray Noble are in the cast. Coveted role of leading lady to Astaire in the latter's first solo starring vehicle goes to Joan Fontaine, who was discovered less than a year ago by Jesse Lasky playing in a Hollywood Little Theatre Production. She made her debut in a big role in *Quality Street*, shortly afterwards playing opposite Preston Foster in *You Can't Beat Love*.

Next picture re-uniting the Astaire-Rogers team will be *Castles in the Air*. Story deals with Vernon and Irene Castle, first professional ballroom team to win fame and fortune. Pandro S. Berman will produce, Oscar Hammerstein direct, Irene Castle act as technical advisor.

## United Artists

Old-line producers were greatly shocked of late when Walter Wanger decided to photograph an actual dawn on New York's Fifth Avenue for his *Vogues*. Stock stuff had been used to indicate the locality for so long that most of Hollywood had forgotten the place really existed.

Wanger's coming programme includes Madeleine Carroll's *Personal History*, to be followed by *The River is Blue*, Spanish civil war story with Sylvia Sidney. Hecht and MacArthur are scripting *Wuthering Heights*, which they regard as their best joint writing effort to date.

Tallulah Bankhead is definitely set for the Scarlet O'Hara role in *Gone with the Wind*. Ann Harding is reported to be testing for the part of Melanie, and latest rumours have it that Clarke Gable and Fredric March may be cast.

Reports that Charlie Chaplin will abandon his tramp roles for a "new personality" are emphatically denied. At present he is working on his first talkie, to star Paulette Goddard. He writes, directs and produces, but will not appear in it.

Jimmy Wong Howe, only Chinese cameraman in the industry, is nursing the idea of filming his native country. He had cherished the idea of doing camerawork on *The Good Earth*, but when the assignment failed to materialise he resolved to turn producer and director. Ambition is to record in film the lives of millions of his countrymen who dwell in sampans on the Chinese rivers.

Born in China as Wong Tung Jim, Howe was educated in America, received his early camera training under de Mille, starting as a camera carrier and ending as a chief. Most important pictures were *The Trail of the Lonesome Pine*, and *Laugh, Clown, Laugh* in the silent era, and and more recently *Viva Villa*, *The Thin Man*, *Fire Over England* and *The Prisoner of Zenda*. His technical inventions in camera construction are highly valued in Hollywood.

## Paramount

Marlene Dietrich gets the star role in *French Without Tears*, adaption of Terry Ratigan's Criterion Theatre success. Mitchell Leisen, who made *Swing High, Swing Low*, will direct.

*Money from Home*, steeplechase comedy by Damon Runyon, is to be filmed with Shirley Ross in the lead.

Paramount and Sam Goldwyn, who have been feuding for a year or so over the services of Gary Cooper, have settled their differences. Parties have signed a pact whereby the former lets Goldwyn have director Henry Hathaway for three pictures and the latter lets Paramount have Gary Cooper for one.

Cooper's one is *Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*, Ernst Lubitsch production with Claudette Colbert. Comedy role goes to Edward Everett Horton. Gloria Swanson made the film as a silent.

Company also hopes to get Cooper for P. C. Wren's Foreign Legion story *Beau Geste*, alongside Oscar Homolka, Frances Farmer and Ray Milland. Bertram Milhauser, who scripted *Ebb Tide*, has been signed to work on the screenplay, with Lucien Hubbard producing. After *Beau Geste* comes *The Marching Herd*, spectacular western in the *Texas Rangers* tradition.

Films on the floor include *True Confession*, Carole Lombard–Fred MacMurray starrer directed by Wesley Ruggles; *The Big Broadcast of* 1938 with Martha Raye, Dorothy Lamour and Shirley Ross; and a Gladys Swarthout musical, *The Yellow Nightingale*.

## M.G.M.

Currently shooting are *Mannequin*, Joan Crawford–Spencer Tracy co-starrer directed by Frank (*Big City*) Borzage; *Navy Blue and Gold*, story of Annapolis life with Robert Young, James Stewart, Florence Rice and Lionel Barrymore; *The Four Marys* with Myrna Loy, Franchot Tone and Rosalind Russell; and Wallace Beery's *Bad Man of Brimstone*, saga of the overthrow of lawlessness with the coming of progress to the West.

Valuable social service in the U.S. is done by *Crime Does not Pay* featurettes. Latest is *Soak the Poor*, written by an ex-G.-Man, spotlighting the abuses of public and private charities.

*Today is Tonight*, original yarn by Jean Harlow, has been placed on the M.G.M. production chart. Maude Fulton is scripting.

Luise Rainer is having a Sarah Bernhardt screenplay written for her by Bernhardt's own grandson-in-law, Louis Verneuil, French playwright.

## Italy

Hal Roach closed one of the biggest deals of the year when he signed an agreement to produce four operas for the screen, all to be made in Italy, financed by Italy, with Vittorio Mussolini, eldest son of Il Duce, as his partner.

Story goes that the idea of Italy financing the production of big films for world release was originally hatched by Reanto Senise, who brought it to the attention of picture-minded Mussolini. Mussolini in his turn introduced the idea to his father, who gave permission for the enterprise to proceed if an experienced producer was brought from England or America to head production. Overtures were also made to Korda, Wilcox and Wanger, who still have an open invitation to shift production activities to Rome any day they wish.

Company is to be known as Ramfilmco and plans to make four pictures to start, all operas, on which $6,000,000 will be spent; half of the massive new plant and studios at Cinecity have been put at its disposal, with an understanding that Roach may later move out and build his own studios. Operas to be filmed will be *Rigoletto*, *Aida*, *Traviata*, and finally *Tosca*.

New regulations in Italy provide that only twice as many foreign films may be shown as Italian films—which has set exhibitors wondering whether the industry in the country can produce fast enough to keep the theatres supplied, even with the help of Ramfilmco. During the past season 41 films were produced in Italy; so according to regulations exhibitors will only be able to show those plus 82 foreign films—123 altogether. Up to now American producers alone had been sending over 150 pictures each year.

Last season's production was necessarily small because of the effect of sanctions, the burning of two big stages at Cinecity, and the great demand made on the industry's time and labour by *Condottieri* and *Scipio the African*, two large-scale pictures.

Quite a number of American films have failed to pass the Italian censor of late, for political, religious and moral reasons, and in some cases for no stated reason at all. Chaplin's *Modern Times* was exhibited in the country a couple of times and was then withdrawn from circulation, the censors refusing any explanation to United Artists. *Beloved Enemy*, *You Only Live Once*, *These Three*, *Woman Chases Man* and *The Garden of Allah* were others held up by the board.

## Russia

Romm—director "thirteen" on the floor at Mosfilm, Moscow, is working on a new film provisionally titled *Revolt*. Complete railway station and goodsyard has been built in the studio and look exactly like the real thing.

Moscow Chronicle Films, chief newsreel and semi-documentary organisation (Vertov works there) are building a large studio to cope with new and ambitious schemes. Need for it is also due to demands of such reportages as *Joy March* (physical culture parade in Red Square) which had 36 cameras, and the urgency of doing big jobs in a hurry such as the full history of the Gromov Moscow-San Francisco flight which was put out complete with all American material and an entire reel covering the arrival in U.S.S.R. on the second day after the event.

## Oh! Doctor!

*Thoughts inspired by the Hollywood idea of a Medical Practitioner.*

I'm disappointed in my doc.,
I rather feel he's failed me;
I don't infer
He'd ever err
In naming just what ailed me—
He does not seem so picturesque
As him we see behind a desk,
In Hollywooden dramas—
The type for whom
One sweeps one's room
And dons one's best pyjamas.

The Moving Picture Medico,
'Tis he the babies bawl for;
No need to tell
'Tis he as well
Some nifty nurse will fall for.
Yet on reflection I can see
I'd rather have my own M.D.
Who is no nurse's lover;
And would not err
(For love of her)
While stitching up my cover. . . .

And if there's one
Thing I like done
Ten miles beyond
The nearest blonde—
It's stitching up my cover.

## WIT FROM THE COURTS

At Tottenham Police Court recently, a policeman told a man called as a witness to go into the box. As the man moved forward he started to take off his coat. The following scintillating exchange of wit ensued:

The P.C.: Keep your coat on.
The Man: I'm sorry; I thought you said I was to box.

Jolly comical, what? Though not more so than a *bon mot* perpetrated by my aunt, a Mrs. Dinwiddy, when she was brought up at Vine Street on a charge of maliciously tickling a car-park attendant in St. James's Square, after a reunion of old Girton Girls. When told by the magistrate to take the oath, she replied, quicker than you could say E. G. Robinson: "Oath thertainly, Mr. Judge."

This earned her a round of applause, two offers of jobs as scenario-writer and a sharp crack, *sub rosa*, from a policeman's truncheon.

CUT THIS OUT AND PEEP THROUGH THE HOLE AT YOUR FRIENDS

## WHAT A CELL!

A craze for writing has swept over the Swieto Krzyz prison, which houses some of Poland's most notorious criminals. Novels, short stories and fairy tales are being poured out by nearly 100 enthusiastic authors.

The prison authorities, who are obliged to provide pencils and paper free, are snowed under with manuscripts. Prison rules demand that all the stories shall be censored by the authorities, and the censors are now kept working far into the night.

One or two of the convicts' literary efforts, it is stated, show considerable talent.

—*News Item.*

*Short scena inspired by the above, showing that the pen is mightier than the penitentiary. The scene is a prison cell. The time is ten years hard.*

*Lefty:* No, I'm *not* going to help you file through those bars. I'm writing my fairy story.

*Butch:* You and your silly old fairy story! Come on and lend a hand with this hacksaw.

*Lefty:* It's not a silly old fairy story. I showed it to the warder and *he* liked it. So there!

*Butch:* Pooh! You ought to be like old Strangler in the next cell and get a little meat into your stuff. The Governor had to cut his last story to hell.

(*Enter a warder carrying paper and pencils and Roget's Thesaurus.*)

*Warder:* Here you are, Lefty. I got the Razor-Slasher across the way to sharpen your pencil.

*Lefty:* Thanks ever so. And one other thing, warder. Do you think you could ask the boys to stop typing a little earlier in the evenings? I couldn't get a wink of sleep last night.

*Warder:* I'll try, but just now I've got to go down to the condemned cells and help the boys correct some proofs. I told them they should never have started on a serial. Butch, will you *please* stop digging that hole in the floor while I'm talking!

*Lefty:* Ooh, warder, you remember my telling you that I was stuck with my story and couldn't think how to get the Fairy Peaseblossom out of the Wicked Ogre's clutches?

*Warder:* Yeah, I remember.

*Lefty:* Well, I figured it out this way: this Peaseblossom doll has got a gat stuffed down her stocking and when the Ogre starts making passes at her, she gives him de woiks, see? Then she scrams down the Magic Bean-

(*Continued in next column*)

## *Come into the Kitchen*

In a month loud with the clamour of war, the shrill pipings of dictators and the monotonous thud-thud of falling leaves, it was refreshing to read of the magnificent response accorded to an urgent appeal for a kitchen-maid, issued on behalf of Mr. Robert Taylor.

In fact, the issue was so heavily over-subscribed that hosts of women had to be turned away from the agency whence the appeal was sent forth. They were then able to return to their secretarial work and clerking, explaining to their bosses that there was fog on the line and you know how it holds up the trains, don't you?

There is more in this than mere mass hysteria. It demonstrates very forcibly, we think, that the spirit of service still burns with a hard bright flame in the British bosom. It reminds us, too, of those dear dead days when we were working as parlourmaid's mate in the employ of Miss Garbo.

Miss Garbo took the place in our lives that had formerly been occupied by our games-mistress. We worshipped her. Nothing was too much trouble. We would work like slaves to get a good polish on her goloshes on the rare occasions when she went out to dinner; and on more than one occasion we sat up far into the night re-stringing her hair net in readiness for the morrow.

And sometimes, when she came in from a walk in the rain, we would take her dripping oilskins from her and finger the soft fabric lovingly, perhaps pressing it to our cheeks, hot and greasy though they were from slaving over a hot stove. And there we would sit with our dreams, until an explosion in the oven reminded that there was work to do, and we would hurry away, chiding ourselves for the big, sentimental fluffs we were.

Naturally, Miss Garbo had few secrets from us, and I do not think we are betraying any confidences when we divulge that quite her most frequent visitor was a Mr. Harpo Marx. You could be quite sure that it was Mr. Marx's droshky that would be waiting at the door every night to take her to her scat-singing classes.

### WHAT A CELL!—continued

stalk and hides out until the heat's off.

*Butch:* You gotta make her take the rap for it in the end, Lefty. Your public expects it.

*Warder:* Well, so long, boys. Don't forget our Literary Luncheon to-day. There'll be the usual punk speeches.

(*He goes out, tripping over a rope-ladder which Butch is busy making.*)

# LORUM

Rodney Hobson

## DANGEROUS CURVES AHEAD

The news that Beauty Queens are to be plumper in future will come as welcome tidings to us old bucks who like our women to *look* like women and pass the port blast you.

In certain circles, however, the news is likely to meet with a mixed reception. Seaside Mayors and Town Councillors, upon whose shoulders falls the onerous task of checking up the measurements of our Carnival Queens, are expected to put up a spirited opposition to any alteration in the old dimensions.

"The 35-inch hip was good enough for our fathers," said the Mayor of Sweating Profuseleigh, Sussex, "and I guess we'll string along with them. You can tell the readers of your magazine that the Town Council and I mean to hold out for the 35-inch hip and no larking about. Any change in the dimensions of our British Girls can only be a retrograde step in a backwards direction."

Mr. Herbert Baggs, a member of the Dagenham Carnival Committee, said: "An inch or two here and there is neither here nor there. Our Beauty Queens must be allowed to develop along their own lines."

Snooks Grieser, whose opinion was not asked, said: "I'm in favour of bigger Beauty Queens. I like 'em curvaceous."

The larger Beauty Queen is not expected to come into operation until next season, when all those coming up for their annual Lloyds Survey will be expected to conform to the new specification. The change will necessitate drastic alterations in the standard books of reference on the subject—Hinklemeyer's *Strains and Stresses in Beauty Queens*, and Professor Waldo Droole's masterly analysis, *Ankles Aweigh.*

An interesting study is afforded by the growth of British Beauty Queens in recent years:—

| | |
|---|---|
| Bust | 4 in. increase |
| Calf | ½ in. ,, |
| Ankle | ¾ in. ,, |

Compare this with the changes in the British Film Producer over the same period:

| | |
|---|---|
| Stomach | 4 in. decrease |
| Neck | Unlimited |
| Head | Still swelling |

## Sayings

"It really is very annoying to find hikers, with scarcely anything on, wandering about one's garden."—*Beverley Nichols.*

"Not a single hair has been cut."—*Shirley Temple's mother.*

"I'm not a great cook, of course, but I can fix things to suit myself."—*Victor McLaglen.*

* * *

"A boy's best friend is his mutter," as the crooner said, signing a new contract.

## Lump in the Throat Department

Happening to glance at our neighbour's *Daily Express* when we were in there the other day, mending a fuse for his wife, we saw the following words, glowing like precious jewels from a column dealing with that Street of Heartbreak, that Boulevard of Frayed Trousers—Wardour Street. We think they are beautiful enough to reprint here:

> *Two of the greatest film salesmen in the street are Maxie Thorpe, of Columbia, and Teddy Carr, of United Artists. Each is immeasurably moved at a film.*
>
> *At the close of the trade show of "Lost Horizon," which Maxie was selling, he went up to a buyer and said, awed: "Boy, I didn't even know the picture was over. I was in a coma."*
>
> *And when Teddy Carr saw "A Star is Born" he had a lump in his throat as big as an apple.*

It does one good to read words like these, for they bear out a conviction that many of us, I think, secretly cherish. Sometimes, when the futility of things threatens to overcome me and my faith in humanity is at its lowest ebb, I have the office brougham put me down at one of those quaintly carved temples where they hold trade shows. There I stand waiting, nervously fingering my rough cloth cap, and being jostled about more than somewhat by the gendarmes. (We know our Runyons.)

I do not think there is a more immeasurably moving sight than that offered by the boys coming out of a trade show. The majority of them are weeping unashamedly; their shoulders are shaking with the intensity of their sobs; they press tiny wisps of cambric to their streaming eyes. Many are leaning on the arm of a friend, if they can find one. And as for lumps in the throat, the boys look like a party of goitre cases holding their annual convention.

One or two of the tougher ones, of course, manage to keep their emotions under control, but their eyes are suspiciously bright and there is a catch in their voice as they ask Ernie Fredman for a loan of his handkerchief. "It's the smoky atmosphere," they say; and one turns away, for the sight of a film-salesman in the grip of a great emotion is not one to linger over. Even when the emotion loosens its grip, he doesn't look so hot.

And so I watch them drift away, to sob themselves to sleep in their garrets in Berkeley Street. Their weeping mingles with the eternal music of London and is lost . . .

But then, you can't grudge the boys a quiet blubber when you see some of the stuff they have to sell.

*Associated British Picture*

**"Hope the critics will like the cocktails."**

"TWO FILMS THAT WILL DO NOTHING BUT GOOD"

*News Chronicle*

## CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

PRODUCED BY JOHN GRIERSON
DIRECTED BY BASIL WRIGHT

Life as it really is. *The Times*

Some of the best studies of childhood I have ever seen . . . a wonder film. *The Star*

Brilliantly produced and directed. *Daily Film Renter*

Interesting, disturbing, informative and poetic. *The Spectator*

Worthy of attention throughout the Country. *The Cinema*

An enormously moving and persuasive piece of film-craft. *The Observer*

A remarkable film . . . jars the social conscience. *Daily Herald*

Will strongly appeal to everyone who sees it. *New Era*

## THE SMOKE MENACE

PRODUCED BY JOHN GRIERSON
DIRECTED BY JOHN TAYLOR

Capable direction and first-rate photography. *Daily Film Renter.*

Considerable social value. *The Scotsman*

A thoroughly interesting and agreeable essay . . . a good sense of the dramatic. *The Cinema*

Fine film. *Daily Express*

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# MOVIES IN MADRID

## *by*

## *Richard Watts, Jun.*

*"They Shall not Pass"—International Sound Films*

IF you stand on the balcony of the twelfth floor of Madrid's embattled skyscraper, the Telefonica, and look but a few kilometres in the distance, you will see enemy territory on three sides of you. As all the world knows, the city has undergone nine months of the terrors, perils and hardships of modern warfare's refinements of beleaguerment. It has undergone weeks and months of artillery bombardment and, until the government became powerful in the air, of murderous aviation assault. Shells of every variety have rained into its streets and against its buildings. Perhaps five thousand civilians have been slain, whole districts have been razed and something like a tenth of the city has been destroyed. The Gran Via, one of the main thoroughfares of Madrid, is not far from a shambles, and the telephone building alone has been struck by exactly 117 shells. Yet the people go quietly and serenely about the business of their everyday life and seem as carefree as if their Spain was the land of song and laughter that the tourist circulars used to insist that it was.

It must be clear to the commanders of the Fascist forces that no great military purpose is served by the shelling of Madrid. The only answer, outside of attributing the artillery attacks to sheer spitefulness, is that their purpose is to break the morale of the populace. And in this it is obvious that their failure is as miserable as the Fascist failure to capture the city at the beginning of the siege, when every military authority—save General Miaja—thought that its fall was inevitable.

In fact, the whole enemy procedure has had an exactly opposite effect. It merely has made the people more stubborn and determined in their resistance. Despite everything, the population of Madrid remains approximately the one million that it was at the beginning of the war, and, for all the strain of undergoing a long and arduous siege, the people remain unshaken and unafraid, a tribute not only to the courage of the men and women of Spain, but to the dogged determination and genius for adjustment of the human spirit. Half an hour after a fierce bombardment the people are calmly walking through the streets once more and the children are again playing unconcernedly on the sidewalks.

THEN just for excitement, the people go to the "movies" or see a very bad vaudeville show. Thirty picture theatres and sixteen of the so-called "legitimate" variety are crowded every afternoon and evening—there are no night shows, because Madrid becomes a ghost city after dark. For thrills the Madrilenos, who have been shelled the night before and have watched air battles in the clouds above them that morning, attend *The Lives of a Bengal Lancer*, or James Cagney in *G Men*. Nothing seems to entertain them more than to watch a lot of actors blazing away at one another with blank cartridges, and the scene in *Top Hat*, where Fred Astaire, in one of his dances, uses his cane as a machine gun and shoots down a male chorus, is received rapturously at every showing.

You might think that the Madrilenos went to the films for escape and would hardly enjoy pictures that dealt with a topic so close to home as, say, an air battle. Yet *The Hawk and the Eagle*, a Paramount film of perhaps four years ago, which had some pretty grim scenes of aerial combat, is a great success here, and a picture showing an air raid, wherein the actors being bombed behaved unrealistically, became a local laugh riot, with the audience calling out ironic advice to the players on the screen. Incidentally, it is rather curious to note that several German films and such an imperialistic photoplay as *Rhodes* are being shown, and that at least two child vaudeville actresses are billed as "The Spanish Shirley Temple."

TRULY Madrid did seem a ghost city when Mr. Neville, the reformed bridge expert, and I arrived at 1 o'clock in the morning, just two weeks ago. There wasn't a light in the streets save that made by the headlights of our car, and no one seemed stirring in the city save a few assault guards, armed with rifles, who patrolled the sidewalks, silently and slowly. In the moonlight the amount of wreckage seemed over-emphasised and Madrid appeared as an ancient, dead city, deserted by its inhabitants centuries before. There was still some activity at the press office, however, and the bushy-haired woman in charge suggested that we stay at the Florida Hotel, since she knew there were vacant rooms there and the place was probably safe, as it had not been shelled for several days. I am grateful to her for recommending the Florida, since it is the sort of hotel Robert E. Sherwood might have thought up for a Spanish version of *Idiot's Delight*.

It certainly is in the line of fire, anyway, and when shells whistle over your head you can't be sure whether they are being fired by the besiegers or the defenders. The men who work at the hotel insist that it is one of the safest places imaginable, since the rebels can shoot at it from only two sides. Furthermore, they remind you that it has been hit only sixteen times, while the place next door has been struck 35 times. No one has yet been killed in it, although the room occupied by Sefton Delmar, the correspondent of *The London Express*, was demolished when, fortunately, he was absent.

The Florida is situated just off the favourite shelling ground of the enemy, the Gran Via, and the enemy can shell you from a couple of excellent vantage points. In fact, there is a school of thought which holds that the very existence of the hotel is a gesture of contempt toward the enemy. These people sometimes refer to the hotel as Shell Chateau, although those of us who eat there regularly prefer to think of it as Olive Oil Manor. But the horse steak is excellent and it is the only hotel in town in which you can get a hot bath, and you know how we bold Anglo-Saxons enjoy our hot baths. If we only had had a piano in the lobby the other morning we could have played the last act of *Idiot's Delight* right there.

***(Courtesy, New York Herald Tribune)***

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# SOUND-RECORDING FOR FILMS

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*By* W. F. Elliott. *Foreword by* Paul Rotha

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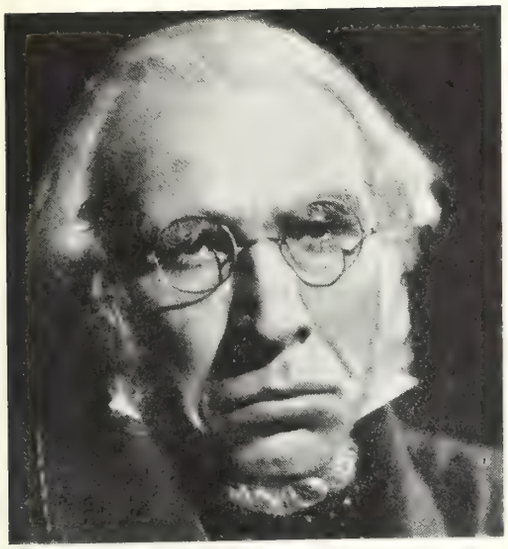
# THEATRE



**William Devlin as Gladstone**

A recent biographer discovered two Mr. Gladstones, one the son of the Liverpool business man, the other the Oxonian. The biographer had some excuse; he had to find some way of explaining the apparent inconsistencies of Gladstonian policy, but his example has been too generously followed. The entertainment seeker in London will have great difficulty in avoiding one of the many Mr. Gladstones on view, all of them different and none of them entirely satisfactory.

In fact, Hugh Williamson's play at the Gate Theatre, *Mr. Gladstone*, was written to right the wrong being done to the Liberal sermoniser elsewhere. Hugh Williamson makes no bones about there being more than one Gladstone, nor does he bother to attempt the reconciling of apparently irreconcilable material. His portrait is of the Gladstone whose picture still frowns down from the walls of workmen's houses in the North of England: the Gladstone who understood the art and the importance of mobilising the radicalism of the newly enfranchised masses against the older Tory and Whig politicians: the Gladstone of later years, shown as the spokesman of the masses, the defendant and exponent of liberty and democracy, the opponent of jingoism and imperialism, pictured for us in a series of incidents beginning with his entry into the Bulgarian Atrocities campaign, glimpsing his difficulties with Ireland and the Sudan and ending with his final retreat before the Big Navy politics of the new Liberalism.

The incidents are woven together by stressing the relationship between Gladstone and the Queen (who is also hard to dodge this month) contrasted in the opening, where the Queen bids an affectionate farewell to Disraeli, and the end of the play where the Queen, bidding farewell to Gladstone, makes little effort to conceal her dislike of his policy and person and her pleasure at his retirement. The Queen is shown as serving the interests of Tory imperialism and conniving with the Tory Opposition against the Liberal Government.

The play has been refused licence for public showing by the Lord Chamberlain, presumably because of its dramatisation of the conflict between the Queen and Gladstone. Yet this conflict existed in fact, and is of historical importance to an understanding of the period, of the Queen and of Gladstone. Whether or no Mr. Williamson's Gladstone is a full and complete one, his version of the conflict with the Queen is undoubtedly close to history. That this play should be banned from the stage, whilst any infantile version of the 'glorious reign' and the 'good and gracious queen' is allowed full scope to mis-teach history, shows that the censorship is used for Party purposes as much in dealing with plays of history as it is for dealing with plays of the contemporary scene.

It is a good, workmanlike play, and Mr. William Devlin gives an adequate rendering of the Gladstone dear to the hearts of nineteenth century democracy. Miss Josephine Middleton's Queen looks a bit like Anna Neagle's at times, but is a clever piece of quiet, under-emphasis.

* * *

Still in the last century—melodrama returns to the Lyceum with *Wanted for Murder*. It is, however, a much diluted, and enfeebled melodrama. The old Lyceum plays didn't bother about probing the mind of the murderer or explaining his actions: they aimed at thrills pure and simple. *Wanted for Murder* has all the trappings—elaborate scenic effects, moving stages and, of course, a sprinkling of working class characters who drop their aitches and behave generally in the illiterate manner beloved of the Victorian stage. But the guts are gone: doubt and a slight sophistication hangs over the most dreadful deeds, blunting their effect on us. The murderer doesn't kill because he's a bloody scoundrel: he's the victim of heredity, and the causes of his actions are to be found in the text-books of psychology. So the final curtain brings us an assurance that he will not be hung, for he is insane, which must be a relief because he is acted by the best looking man in the cast and by all rights should have been the hero.

*Wanted for Murder* belongs to the past in one very important aspect: it moves far too slowly for these days of fast moving crime plays and of the cinema.

* * *

There are a few more 19th century relics, this time at the Queen's. Shakespearian production has speeded up considerably in the last few years, but Gielgud's *Richard II* is much too slow. The slowing down seems to be due to the littering of the stage with bits and pieces that look as though they came straight from the Gothic Revival of the 19th century, to a costuming which at times makes the stage look like a fancy dress ball, and to a seeking after processional effect which turns the play into pageant on several occasions.

Settings, decorations and processions combine to weaken what is otherwise one of the most satisfactory performances of the play for many years. It is when the verse is allowed full sway that the performance rises to greatness: Gielgud, peculiarly suited to the part, brings out the beauty and rhythm of the verse, at times overwhelming in its cadenced melancholy, as few living actors could. Michael Redgraves' Bolinbroke compares badly with Ralph Richardson's of some years back, while Leon Quartermain speaks John of Gaunt's high-spot speech as though he were a High Churchman reciting the 23rd Psalm. Taken for all in all, this is a revival for which we must be grateful, and its success promises well for the projected series of revivals at the Queen's.

* * *

For the rest, Mr. Priestley has two competent dramas running, both spiced with the Dunne Time Theory—of these we will write more fully next month: Donald Wolfit, who began management of a Shakespearian repertory company with a week at the Wimbledon, begins a week at the King's, Hammersmith, on November 1st; whilst in the world of Vaudeville, the Windmill Theatre brings on its ninety-seventh show, with slightly better comedy than usual, much catering for the artistic worshippers of the body beautiful and impressions by Ernest Shannon, deserving notice if only because he does not impersonate either Maurice Chevalier or Mae West.

**RICHARD CARR**

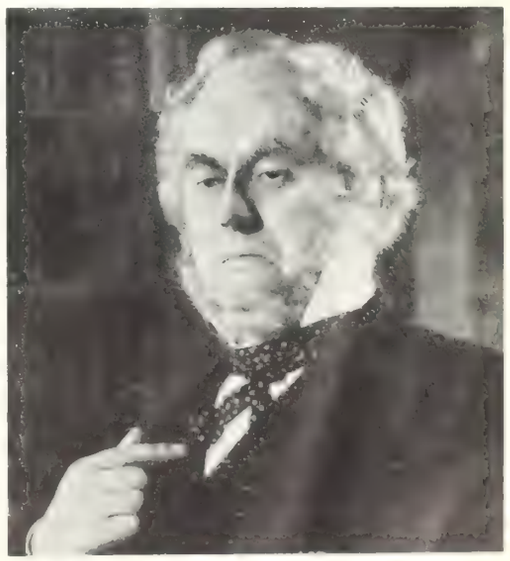
* * *

The new series of London Theatre Concerts, arranged by Betty Humby and Haigh Marshall, under the patronage of Mrs. Augustus Ralli and blessed from on high by Sir Thomas Beecham, opened on 10th October at the Cambridge Theatre. The first season is devoted to Mozart. There will be one Sunday concert each month until May. In January, Sir Thomas Beecham himself is giving an orchestral concert.

If we are to judge from the first one, these concerts will be excellent.

Mr. Haigh Marshall conducted a hand-picked orchestra in a programme which included the March in D major (K445), two piano concertos (K459, K491) Despina's arias from "*Cosi fan tutte*," and a Sinfonia Concertante for four solo winds.

The soloists were Cyril Smith, Nan Maryska, and Betty Humby herself, who commèred the show, directed the traffic, altered the interval, changed it back again, and finished by playing the C minor piano concerto (K491) with one hand tied behind her back. **T.F.**



**Arthur Young in "Victoria the Great"**

# RADIO

## AMERICAN RADIO COMMENTARY

### Edited by Thomas Baird

THE American School of the Air of the Columbia Broadcasting System, returns to the air for its ninth season with an expanded programme in which the National Education Association, representing three-quarters of a million teachers and officials, takes part.

The Progressive Education Association, of some 10,000 teachers and administrators, also takes part in the development and presentation of another programme representing a new departure in subject matter of radio education.

Each school day during the term, the American School of the Air is heard over the network.

Nine separate series will run during the term. Monday has been divided into two divisions, the first "Exit and Entrances" filling the full half-hour for thirteen weeks, and the "Human Relations Forum" running half an hour, the final thirteen.

"Exits and Entrances" is the new programme sponsored by the NEA. It is devoted to dramatisation and comment on current events. Shepard Stone, assistant to the Sunday Editor of the *New York Times*, is the commentator. Mr. Stone is in Europe now making a survey of the present situation there and his first two talks will go to American listeners by short wave from London. "The Human Relations Forum" which occupies the final thirteen Mondays is the broadcast arranged in conjunction with the Progressive Education Association. It will consist of discussions among high school students.

American literature and music, designed for high school students is given on alternate Tuesdays. Dr. Louis Woodson Curtis, director of music in the public schools of Los Angeles, writes the script for the musical portions and Bernard Herrmann conducts the orchestra. The National Council of Teachers of English brings to the microphone eminent American authors. These include H. L. Mencken, Zona Gale, Robert P. T. Coffin, and Constance Skinner.

Dorothy Gordon's "Songs for Children" which occupies fifteen minutes for the first fifteen Thursdays, is followed by short wave broadcasts from foreign lands of children singing folk songs and greeting American Youth. Future broadcasts will come from Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, Esthonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Wales. Japan and China will be included if possible. A boy and girl sing native folk songs, and send greetings in their native tongues. These are translated immediately.

Dramas, interviews with youngsters recently out of high school, and expert advice comprise the vocational guidance programme.

* * *

Internationally famous scientists and explorers unite in presenting a new series of programmes over the WABC-Columbia network.

Entitled "New Horizon" the new series is given in co-operation with the American Museum of Natural History as part of the latter's Ten Year Development Plan. "New Horizon" enlists the talents of the explorers and scientists attached to the Museum staff, plus nationally known figures. Listeners are transported from pole to pole, across deserts into jungles, deep into unexplored mountains, through the Seven Seas and back into prehistoric ages for glimpses at awe-inspiring monsters.

The following prominent scientific personalities take part: Dr. Vilhjamar Stefansson, noted Arctic Explorer and president of the Explorers Club; Dr. Walter Granger, curator of Fossil Mammals of the Museum; Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews, famed Asiatic explorer; Dr. Harry C. Raven, gorilla expert of the Museum; Col. Theodore Roosevelt Jr., one of the world's outstanding big game hunters; Dr. Barnum Brown, currently studying dinosaur relics in Wyoming, and Dr. Harold E. Anthony, leader of the Museum's Expedition which is exploring Shiva Temple and Wotan's Throne, two of the Sky Island features in the Grand Canyon of Arizona.

* * *

The Columbia Broadcasting Systems Department of Talks have inaugurated a new series of network programmes entitled "News and Reviews" combining last minute news reports and expert analysis of current events.

A trio of commentators, H. V. Kaltenborn, Bob Trout, and Pierre Bedard combine their talents for reporting and comment.

Kaltenborn discusses and analyses foreign news of the week and Bedard reviews domestic events in a similar manner. Trout gives a *résumé* of the day's news events.

Bedard is director of the French Institute of New York and Secretary General of the Alliance Française. He is heard regularly in France through CBS facilities. Trout covered the Coronation for CBS and has introduced President Roosevelt on almost every occasion the President has been heard since his inauguration.

* * *

George Olsen and his famous band playing from New York's New International Casino and Cab Calloway and his orchestra broadcasting from his familiar place at the Cotton Club in Harlem, are now being heard.

Olsen's orchestra, which has been a Columbia feature for several years, has been one of America's most popular dance organisations since playing for the Broadway production of "Kid Boots" with Eddie Cantor. Olsen played his first hotel engagement at the Multnomah Hotel in Portland sixteen years ago.

Cab Calloway, son of a Rochester, N.Y., lawyer and real estate broker, began his career in music as a choir singer at a Bethlehem Methodist Episcopal Church. When his family decided to train him for the law, he took up his studies at Chrain College in Chicago. To support himself he joined his sister in a coloured show. The career he has established for himself on those beginnings should be simple to trace for those who know the origin of Scat and Hy-De-Hi, and the true Calloway tradition.

* * *

Scientific contributions to the endless battle against crime are presented in drama form in the "Crusade Against Crime," "Gang Busters." Cases in which minute pieces of evidence prove to be the deciding factor in "breaking" the crime, are the subjects.

Ordinarily "Gang Busters" re-enacts the activities of some notorious criminal, but the new evils bring to the attention of the radio audience cases showing the futility of even the most carefully planned crimes when science is drawn into the solution of the case.

In one of the cases—a murder—scientists determine that a bullet had passed through a woman's breast before entering the body of the victim. One case hinged on the imprint of a trouser leg on the window sill, which when photographed and enlarged was found to match the weave in the cloth of a pair of trousers owned by suspect. In a third case, a letter written with six words to each line, an occupational trait of telegraphers, led to the solution of a major crime.

## *"The Fall of the City"*

*The first of a series of experiments in radio drama was transmitted on the National Programme on Thursday, October 7th. The play chosen was "The Fall of the City" by Alexander McLeish. This work was first broadcast by the Columbia Broadcasting System, and directed by Irving Reis. Other experimental programmes will be given by the B.B.C. at regular intervals.*

We had expected that the B.B.C. would tell us what the experiment was to be. But no, the play was presented as any other play would have been and with no more introduction. We were left to pursue internal evidence to discover the experimental qualities; and there was very little evidence. There was very little reason to label the play experimental. It obeys all the classical conventions; it has the unities of time, space and action: it has messengers to report off-stage action and confidential dialogue to interpret the movement of the play. It is not a radio play at all.

Within these limits the production of Peter Cresswell was extremely competent and his actors played up with fine inflection and precise timing. But again neither of these elements is peculiarly experimental. We have had good acting and speaking and good production from the B.B.C. in the past.

# RADIO

## Notes of the Month

### By George Audit

### *("The Fall of the City." Contd.)*

We had the good fortune recently to hear some of the productions of the Columbia Workshop. We also heard Mr. Irving Reis expound his theories and explain why *The Fall of the City* is experimental. Reis's conception of experiment is technical. He made *The Fall of the City*, with all its formalism, jump alive because he engineered the job superbly well. He gave to the market place a magnificent perspective. The voices spoke in beautiful spatial relations. His crowd might well have been one of millions. Their shout was terrific yet, by clearing special frequency channels in his crowd noise, his fore-ground actors remained articulate.

Reis told us he used an armoury 300 yards long to house a crowd of some 200. He recorded the crowd noise and played this back on six loud speakers behind the real crowd. He had a time-lag on each recorded crowd which gave the impression of a vast congregation slanting in perspective back towards the horizon. His characters spoke under different acoustical conditions and thus sounded in perspective.

All this may seem unnecessarily complicated, but such a treatment is the only justification for labelling *The Fall of the City* as experimental. If the B.B.C. had been attempting any such aerial acrobatics they should have told us. The subject-matter falls into two parts. The first illustrates the power of oratory, the persuasion of the public will. The theme is the idea of freedom and liberty. It is very reminiscent of *Julius Cæsar*. The second half of the play illustrates that the public cannot sustain the power of its will and readily yields to a master: if there is no master to hand they make one.

The only experiment we can think of is that of borrowing from a distinguished school of radio production. But the B.B.C. had done this before. Some months ago it produced *Meridian*-7-1212. This is an experimental drama written by Irving Reis. It has witty, well-written dialogue: but in this it is not unique. As produced by the Columbia Workshop its virtue was in its technical presentation.

When the B.B.C. produced the play all the subtlety of production technique disappeared and we were left with a drama whose wit lay right outside the native genius of the producers.

The most revealing experiment that the B.B.C. could give us, if they wish to show us what lies on the fringe of radio, would be to play the recording of Reis's production on the same programme with a recording of the B.B.C. production, and at the same time tell us what the experiment is.

You may smile, you may be surprised or informed, but you will seldom get a thrill out of your wireless set. In fact it is one of the most difficult things to produce a thrill in radio. In the cinema or at the theatre it is much easier, because your audience is sitting in an unfamiliar place with subdued lights and they see the events happening with their own eyes which they are always more ready to believe than their ears.

But with the radio you sit in your home. In nine cases out of ten you switch the set on to hear the news or the racing results and you leave it running while you read the paper or eat your supper because your find a little soft music more pleasant as a background than the sounds of the people quarrelling next door and the kids letting off fireworks in the street. Another thing is that family differences always express themselves in terms of radio preferences. If the husband likes the wireless on all the time his wife will generally take to disliking it altogether and will rattle the dishes, slam the doors and tramp on the floor upstairs without any respect for the listener. If the mother likes to hear soft voices and religious music the chances are the son will surreptitiously switch over to his favourite military band. And just when a truce has been declared and the family circle has gathered round to hear a special item a caller will break in to announce some petty scandal or other.

With all these distractions the radio producer has to contend. He has few advantages over the film producer. It is true that he is not confined by Aristotle's unities of time and place but the B.B.C. have made little use of this new freedom. Imagine, for instance, the possibilities in a programme on Spain. With actual recordings of scenes in the battle area and in the cities you could montage voices of the past, of Cervantes, George Borrow, etc., and the speeches and counsels of both camps might be interchanged and contrasted with their achievements. Of course one is not so optimistic as to expect that sort of thing from the B.B.C., but the potentialities are there.

It is often said that broadcasting lends itself to fantasy and horror more easily than any other medium. I do not altogether share this view. I have yet to hear anything on the wireless as terrifying as *Dr. Mabuse* or more fantastic than *The New Gulliver*. The probability is that radio cannot evoke from its audience such extremes of emotion. Its quality is intimacy. It lends itself to suggestion and subtle excitements. I remember the extraordinary effect produced on me by the broadcast of Walter de la Mare's "Yes and Back Again." It was a kind of eerie actuality. And the whole production was so simple, with a few quiet, unusual voices and occasional music. The same emotional restraint was exercised in the "Gallipoli" programme. Here the most stirring scenes were recalled by quiet readings from diaries, memoirs and private letters. And all this brings me back to my original point that radio is not a good medium for the thriller.

In the October issue of "Ariel" (the B.B.C. Staff Magazine), Mr. D. G. Bridson has written a "Plea for Shockers." He pleads "for the gunshots in the darkened room of the cinema, for gallops along cliff edges of suburban lassitude, for dying horses and heroes in the desert of daily life. If radio made a point of broadcasting only such programmes as could be known in advance as capable of shocking—either to laughter, to fear, to anger, to exasperation, to tears, or even to blushes—it would be doing something which it is not always doing to-day."

Coming from a B.B.C. producer these last sentiments are most commendable, but what are their chances of application? Mr. Bridson would probably agree that *The Thin Man* and the recent Paramount newsreel on China were good "shockers" within his definition. But what evidence does he produce that the same thing can be done in radio? Only as an example of *method*, not of effect, does he mention his own programme, "Steel." Now in the opinion of a good many competent critics "Steel" was a failure because it was overloaded with poetic description. His earlier production, "The March of the '45" was a roaring success because his strong sense of rhythm and his use of descriptive verse were admirably suited to convey the action and movement of his story. Mr. Bridson would not use this poetic method for his Harry Hopeful programmes. Why does he want to use it to describe a steel foundry? He says in his article "What is vitally and fore-eminently necessary is that the listener should be made to feel the same emotions *listening* to a description of metal boiling at white heat that he would feel if he could actually *see* it. And those emotions cannot be inspired by a bare description of iron ore in an open-hearth furnace. They can be inspired only by an analogy—by giving him, in simile, a description of something akin to it that arouses his pity, or his sadism, or his terror." Excellent, but Mr. Bridson created such feelings only in spots and then in spite of his outpourings of blank verse.

I only disagree with Mr. Bridson's choice of method. I would suggest that he is putting obstacles in his way if he thinks that he can mix up wild-west gunmen, actuality, poetic description and historical features indiscriminately. Radio will not render wild excitement, terror, laughter or fear as readily as the film (and probably television). It can inspire emotions none the less profound but it must go to work a different way. It may not cause the listener to leap out of his chair but it may make him refuse to leave it.

# LETTERS

## Soviet Films Controversy

Having recently revisited the Soviet Union I wish, unfortunately rather late in the day, to comment on the two controversial articles on the Soviet cinema written last year for *W.F.N.* by H. V. Merowitz and Cedric Belfrage. Both writers after visiting Russia for the first time were of the opinion that the cinema had "gone Hollywood." Unfortunately both of them assumed that their readers were familiar with the complicated discussions on questions of Soviet subject and form in art which are summed up in the opposing ideas of "formalism" and "socialist realism." The latter is the official point of view which has caused a complete change in the style of Soviet art.

I feel that foreigners, being observers rather than participants of the changes in Soviet ideas, imagine more often than not that they understand the causes and share identical feelings with the participants. However the meaning of "formalism" and "socialist realism" seems to me to be this. That "formalism" is any intellectual symbolical or artistic interpretation which the average person may not comprehend. "Socialist Realism" on the other hand, is an idea and a method of presentation which is still in the "melting pot." It is, as I understand it at this moment, an endeavour to produce all works of art in a lifelike manner which is officially considered likely to be fully comprehensible to the *average person in the Soviet state who has lived through, or grown up, traversing the period of military communism to Stalin's constitution.* Neither Mr. Merowitz, Mr. Belfrage nor myself have been involved in such changes, and, therefore, we can only *theoretically imagine what we ourselves should want in art* after twenty years spent in abnormal conditions of life and a revolution of the economic system. We too easily transfer our tastes and prejudices on to the Russian people, and become indignant if their ideas about art are not what we expect them to be.

I saw only three of the most important new films. In none of them were there the camera angles similar to the photographic composition of the early films, no examples of "Russian montage," nor a hint of former "typage." Nevertheless all three pictures were well acted by professionals, were competently handled by young directors, and they interested me because I knew something of the subjects they were dealing with.

*Peter the First*, directed by V. Petrov, presents Peter the Great as a progressive Tzar who introduced European ideas and methods, particularly those of British shipbuilding, to Russia. If his individual brutality is somewhat modified, the film as a whole is not a namby-pamby picture of the 18th century. The style is pictorially effective, the battle scenes reminding one of a succession of enormous oil paintings.

In contrast to this epic is the psychological study directed by two young directors, Heffitz and Zharki, *Deputy of the Baltic*. It deals with the psychological struggle every intellectual, and in this case scientist, had to face when Kerensky's Government was overthrown. The old scientist is so naturally portrayed, and the details of the academic milieu so carefully observed that this film is probably the most valuable document of the Russian academic world during the first period of the Revolution.

Another kind of historical document is constructed by Kusnetsov and Trauberg in the second film of their trilogy on the life of an old Bolshevik, *The Return of Maxim*. The film commences prior to the Great War and traces Maxim's life and his revolutionary work up to the outbreak of war. The most impressive scenes because of their feeling of authenticity are those showing the everyday life among the Petrograd workers and the unpremeditated street battle.

I have the impression that the cinema is endeavouring to show how average people behave towards one another when they are not delivering speeches nor fighting battles.

Frankly I miss the camera angles, the explosive editing, the extraordinary types; but I realise that the whole foreign audience for Soviet films is nothing but a drop in the ocean of Soviet spectators, who, I really do not believe have any longer a taste for technical experiments in the cinema if they ever had. I say *if they ever had* because I am now rather doubtful if the great Russian films ever interested the average Soviet audience except as an illustration of recent events. I doubt if the Russians who saw these films as a new art are numerically larger than the people who appreciate their genius abroad. It is an interesting fact that even in England working-class audiences complain that the symbolism in many of the early Soviet films is difficult for them to grasp; how much more difficult must it be for workers and peasants in Russia many of whom a few years ago could neither read nor write. One is therefore forced to feel that the great directors who we have thought of as *typical* Soviet artists are actually exceptions, standing in relation to their audience somewhat in the same position as those geniuses of the past who lifted the simplest theme on to an abstract plane. Obviously such art will not be sponsored in a state where the demands of the majority are considered to be of greater importance than the desires of the exceptional minority.

**MARIE SETON**

## Circulation Crushes Criticism

Those people like Leslie Withers, who are fighting an uphill battle on the critical front, may well demand an organised resistance by journalists against those sections of the Trade which resent adverse criticism to the point of sabotage. They might also, in so doing, note one significant fact. Resentment rises in strict proportion to circulation. When a critic slammed several expensive productions in a Sunday paper there was a concerted move by the Trade to make sure it should never happen again. The Trade withdrew, or threatened to withdraw, their advertising. This paper has a very large circulation.

But, curiously enough, a critic can, with complete impunity, slam films in those papers, the circulation of which is relatively small.

Withers & Co. may draw their own conclusions from this. The rest of us must face the bitter fact that the Trade does not think it worth while to recognise these writers who, on a meagre pittance which would make Paul Holt guffaw, sweat out their weekly articles for a paper with only 20,000 readers, in a sincere attempt to deal with the more important films, on a basis which would at least not earn the downright censure of say a Matthew Arnold.

Maybe, in the long run, the trade is wrong. Much of Ossian's (and Macpherson's) reputation rests on the vituperation of Samuel Johnson. A thousand fan columns may easily be wrong against the less easily taken criticism of a Seldes or a Graham Greene.

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# NEWSREEL RUSHES

## *NEWSREEL NOTES*

## BY THE COMMENTATOR

**ITEM, TO TRY AGAIN.** The new newsreel—*National News*—was born on the morning of October 11th. The first issue had been nearly six months in preparation. It was edited by a man with thirteen years of newsreel experience (see *W.F.N.* for October). It had a star B.B.C. name as a commentator. It promised unusual and interesting features—for the first time in any newsreel a regular section in colour—another regular section of "news behind the headlines" in the style of *The March of Time*. All round, it looked a winner. It was born on the morning of October 11th. On the afternoon of October 13th it was dead of a broken heart. Its first issue had been hurriedly withdrawn from all cinemas where it was showing—production of future issues was postponed. Behind that news lay the most dramatic misfire of modern newsreel history.

**TERRIBLY DISAPPOINTING** was the almost unanimous verdict of the privileged few thousands who saw the first reel during the two days that it was showing. Led by the critics, a howling chorus of disapproval rose from every quarter. Amazing seemed the fact, that after six months' work by men who had earned the right to be classed as experts in their respective fields, the finished product could possibly be so slipshod, so unimaginative, so lacking in news and entertainment value. With the screams of birth so quickly hushed by the strains of burial, little purpose can be served by a detailed post mortem. But the sooner *National News* Editor, Cecil Snape, and his assistants realise the general fundamental causes of their failure, the sooner will they stand a fair chance of producing a reel with any hope of competing in a field of fierce competition.

**IDEAS ON PAPER** can easily be made to look attractive. In any art—and moden film production is certainly that—the real test of ability comes in the translation of the ideas into a practical form. On paper it looked good to include colour as a regular part of the make-up of *National News*. In practice, judging by the first story, the system of colour photography chosen does not give good enough results. Through the big colour feature films, through past newsreel efforts in Technicolor and Dufaycolor, cinemagoers have been schooled to expect a certain standard of colour reproduction. They will not be satisfied with anything far below that standard. Neither will they be satisfied with non-topical news just because it's in colour. From this point of view, the choice of an army mannequin parade of uniforms, which might have been shot months ago, for the first colour story, was another bad start.

**ON PAPER** it looked good to cash in on the publicity value of commentator Tom Woodroffe, hero of the B.B.C.'s "all lit up" incident. In practice Woodroffe failed completely in adapting his radio technique to the lighter, more concentrated newsreel style. On paper it looked good to follow American reels in putting the commentator on the screen. In practice Woodroffe showed himself a hopeless screen actor. On paper it looked good to imitate *The March of Time* in presenting a bi-weekly "Behind the Headlines" feature story. In practice Editor Snape failed completely to achieve even a faint impression of the American monthly's combination of clarity with lightning speed; its carefully planned distribution of the story-telling between picture, commentary, and music; its spice of controversy. Without any of those features, *National News* story about British agriculture was just plain dull!

**A FRESH START** for *National News* is promised within a few weeks, may even be an accomplished fact before this issue of *W.F.N.* reaches subscribers. But unless those responsible for financing the new venture, those responsible for turning the finance into edited celluloid, adopt a more courageous, more far-seeing policy, they might as well give up now. For nowadays every cinemagoer is a severe critic. He will not accept anything even slightly below the standard he has come to expect. He doesn't want colour unless its good colour. A big-game radio commentator is useless unless he is also a good newsreel commentator. Who cares about news behind the headlines unless the story is presented from an interesting or entertaining angle? Few competent observers will deny that there is a place for a finely edited newsreel in Britain. Whether *National News* can fill that place remains to be seen.

OWING TO LACK OF SPACE GLEN NORRIS'S NEXT OPEN LETTER—TO THE EDITOR OF UNIVERSAL TALKING NEWS—IS HELD OVER TO DECEMBER

**PARAMOUNT ON HIGH!** In *W.F.N.* for August, Glen Norris, in an open letter to its editor, G. T. Cummins, reasoned for a bolder, "snappier" Paramount newsreel. It may be just a coincidence, but no more definite or striking answer to Glen Norris's plea could well have been imagined, than that provided in recent Paramount issues. Apart from making world headlines by putting out, in company with Universal, the full uncensored pictures of the Shanghai bombing horror (see *W.F.N.* for October), Paramount have scored a series of aces with "straight to the point" stories which minced neither word nor picture. There was a speech by Professor Hilton which discussed in serio-comic vein the advantages of "wearing an old school tie in business." Included in the story was a good natured slap at the B.B.C. public school attitude which made audiences gasp, then roar. There was a story about a North of England village being demolished under a slum clearance scheme, which combined with extraordinary effect a light treatment of the subject with a faintly rumbling undertone of the whole explosive question of rehousing. But above all there was the scoop which brought to the newscreens the pictures of the month.

**SCOOP!** With so much advance publicity, none of the reels could possibly make the excuse that they didn't know that Sir Oswald Mosley was again taking his fascists down to London's East End, on Sunday, October 10th. None of the reels would dare to suggest that they didn't expect trouble. Yet apparently only Paramount sent their cameramen out to cover the story. The result had all the thrill and excitement of a prize fight. After one or two opening shots, the marchers are completely forgotten; the camera focuses on a series of lightning skirmishes between police and bystanders. Wherever the pictures were shown, political partisanship was forgotten in the shouts of approval as "Bobbies" laid about with lefts and rights; as they marched off rioters who held broken teeth in place; as they carried off others kicking and writhing. Everywhere, cinemagoers agreed that for sheer entertainment the story had set a new level in newsreel reporting; that if this were a measure of the success of Paramount's new policy of free discussion then Paramount was heading for the heights!


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# PEOPLE WITH PURPOSES

## *NEWS NOTES*

G.B.I.'s production year comes to an end this month, and they start off again with their new schedule in November. Each year it is their aim to put out 50 films and this year that number has been greatly exceeded. Twelve new films from the Secrets of Life series are being completed for both theatrical and non-theatrical distribution. Four biology films and four films on the different aspects of the Coal Industry form an important part of their programme. Six films of the Health and Strength series made under the supervision of the National Advisory Council of Physical Fitness are now ready. *Hereford Herd*, a documentary by Mary Field, on beef, is also included. In addition G.B.I. are making 6 short feature films with religious themes, the first from a story by Tolstoi is already completed, and three more, *Where Love Is*, *As we Forgive*, and *The Unseen Power*, will shortly be released.

* * *

The Realist Film Unit's *Children at School* produced by John Grierson, was shown to the Press on October 5th, and great interest has been displayed by all sections in this very important film. Educational authorities have also expressed their keen satisfaction at the way this social problem has been treated in the film.

Future productions include one on Scotland showing its present condition in the industrial, agricultural, and social fields, and one on painting in colour.

*Modern Orphans of the Storm*, a film dealing with Refugee Basque Children and produced by the Realist Film Unit in conjunction with Victor Saville Productions, is now nearing completion. The commentary for the film is spoken by E. V. H. Emmett, whose voice is so well-known in the Gaumont-British News and in the popular *Secrets of Life* Series.

* * *

*Children at School* and *Smoke Menace* went to America on October 13th for inclusion in Paul Rotha's programmes of British documentaries.

* * *

The display section of the G.P.O. Film Unit are giving an exhibition devoted to Scotland, which is the result of months of photography and research in the country, at the Glasgow Exhibition in May, 1938. Five wall panels are in hand for the interior of the Post Office in the Exhibition grounds. Four of the films in production have a Scottish reference. A one-reeler, *North of the Border*, shows the working of the newly separated Scottish Postal Region. *The Copper Web*, a film of the switch over from overhead wires to underground cables, was shot in Scotland. The Savings Bank are also putting out a film on their work in Scotland. Finally, *S.O.S.* the ship-shore radio film, has been re-scripted in an Aberdeen setting and is under way under the production of Cavalcanti and Harry Watt.

* * *

A Programme of American Documentaries was given by the English-Speaking Union at Dartmouth House on October 7th and 21st. The films shown were *Work Pays America*, *Fortyninth Spate*, *T.V.A. Authorities at Work*, and *Rain for the Earth*. Lord Strabolgi presided and the principal speaker was Mr. Richard de Rochemont, chief of the March of Time.

* * *

**Victor Stoloff with native actor**

Victor Stoloff and James Hamilton Black, of James Hamilton Productions, are over from Egypt, where they have just completed their first film in partnership. Both have lived for many years in Egypt, and experience in folk-lore work was gained in two trial films, *Egyptian Pastoral* and *Arab Fantasia*.

The object of this company is to present documentary films based on Egyptian folklore and to make studies of the various aspects of Egyptian native life and to illustrate the customs and characters of the people. A story will be introduced in each film.

Their first film is entitled *Sails on the Nile* and is a study of Nile boatmen, whose mode of life has preserved its primitive nature and rhythm. In November they are returning to Egypt to start their new production schedule. Among the films to be made are *The Legend of the Earth*, showing the life of an Egyptian peasant attracted by the city; *The Oasis of Siwa* and *Egypt Gift of the Nile*, showing the Nile as a vital element of Egypt. They plan to have all their films processed and recorded in England, and will return here in March to start editing.

* * *

The Travel Association Film Unit have now nearly completed *London on Parade;* among the films being prepared for South America are *Heart of an Empire*, *Industrial Britain*, *Key to Scotland*, *Around the Village Green*, and *So this is Lancashire*.

* * *

Edgar Anstey, Production Director for The March of Time Ltd., left London in early October to spend several months in the New York offices of the company. Mr. Anstey has been with the British March of Time unit for over a year and has to his credit the direction of *Britain*, *Empire and Coronation*, *Food or Physical Training*, *Black Areas* and *Scotland's Highland Problems*.

During his stay in America Mr. Anstey will be called upon to take part in the production of several American items of international interest, with the idea of bringing to them an expression of the British point of view.

Following the formation of Sound-Services Ltd. and the association of that company with Publicity Films Ltd., comes yet another development of this group. This is the formation of a third company, Merton Park Studios Ltd., which will manage the studios at Wimbledon, formerly operated by Publicity Films Ltd., together with the Scenario and Production staffs.

More than twenty pictures are scheduled for immediate production by this group.

Among them is the National Savings Committee's new film which deals with the saving of a village green threatened by the jerry-builders. One unit has been at work on location for some time at Benenden under Ralph Smart who is directing from a script by Terence Egan. This picture will put on the screen for the first time documentary treatment of a village green cricket match.

The Automobile Association have placed with Sound-Services Ltd. a contract for the production of a publicity film, and this is now in production at Merton Park. This film has a humorous story emphasising the chief points of the A.A. service to motorists. Ralph Smart is directing.

Other films going into distribution from this studio include *Land of the Four Kings* (colour-travelogue advertising Cow and Gate Food), *Black Diamonds* (documentary sponsored by National Benzole), *Hoarse Sense* (colour cartoon about Zubes) and *Wee Blue Blossom* (documentary of the work of the Irish Linen Guild).


★ *just published* ★

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## "CHILDREN at SCHOOL"

Each year since 1935 the Gas Industry has sponsored a documentary film dealing with a contemporary social problem. Their first piece of social criticism was the now famous *Housing Problems*, a survey of working class housing conditions. In 1936 they tackled the problem of nutrition in *Enough to Eat?* known non-theatrically as *The Nutrition Film.*

These two films have been followed this year by *Children at School*, an analysis of the public education system of England.

The film opens with a pleasant and informative statement of the progressive education ideal. We see the children in the new schools working under the Dalton and Montessori plans. We see the play theory at work in the nursery schools. New buildings allow sunshine and fresh air to pour into spacious classrooms. The simple disciplines of living are assimilated as part of the normal deportment of the school life. There are places to keep things and the children learn to keep things in place. There are facilities for washing, and the children acquire a facility for keeping clean. There is time for peace and quiet and rest and the children learn the virtue of these. There are playing grounds where children can learn to play and it is a fact that many children coming from city areas need to be taught to play.

But there is another side to the story. This glowing picture of new ideals is functioning in only a restricted sector of the educational field. Buildings are old. Many are insanitary. Many are cold. Many are damp. All this the film shows. Teachers anxious to adopt the newer ideas are defeated by the out-of-date buildings. The new curriculum presupposes space, light, fresh air and quietness. Many schools cannot provide these essentials. Classes of fifty and sixty children forbid the new discipline of free movement. Ill-lighted rooms forbid work for hand and eye.

The film makes the case for reform with a reserved and objective statement of the facts. It takes its chief power from Basil Wright's telling observation. The sure eye of his camera sees for us; his direction makes the observation significant. The production of John Grierson gives this statement of the school's inefficiency, its full sociological reference; it is shown as a problem demanding a democratic solution. New, efficient schools must be built.

*Kensal House* is Frank Sainsbury's report of the gas industry's experiment in housing. It shows the process of slum clearance and the opportunity of clean and healthy living in modern workers' flats.

Domestic science is catered for in this year's gas films by *How to Cook*, the new Boulestin film by Elton and Holmes, and *Pots and Pans*, a demonstration in kitchen planning from the same directors. *Daisy Bell Comes to Town* by Legg and Holmes with the Griffith Brothers of Pantomime fame as the front and hind legs of Dazy Bell, deals with milk cookery. *Two Frightened Ladies*, a Publicity Films Production by Ralph Smart, is this year's Mr. Therm comedy.

# I SHOT IN CORNWALL

AFTER smelling most of the fish markets of Britain, I found myself in Mousehole, Cornwall. It was raining when I arrived, so the pub appeared the best place to meet the locals. I soon got into conversation with the only other customer. After we'd talked about the fishing, politics, French crabbers, broccoli, the fishing, dogs, visitors, sanitation, and the fishing, I remembered my official capacity and announced solemnly that I must call on the postmaster. "I am the postmaster," my companion replied equally solemnly. So I decided to make the film in Mousehole.

We went down in May and started testing for the cast. During our week of testing the sun shone brilliantly. As this was practically the only week in which it shone at all, our tests were very good. We cast the postmaster as the hero. His test was to walk up to the camera and say something. He walked up, and looking to the hills said, "Well, if that isn't old Kingsley Wood up there, gathering mushrooms. How are you, Kingsley, old man?" So we made him the hero.

The other parts were more difficult. One woman backed out at the last moment, because her aunt in the Salvation Army disapproved. Another kept stopping in the middle of shots and turning to the camera with, "This *is* funny, isn't it?" You can imagine our reply.

But we eventually got started. As we had said good-bye to the sun, Mousehole soon realised that films were made by sitting on reflectors in doorways and playing pontoon. Another difficulty was that whenever the sun did come out, the women in the cast had to go home to cook their men's dinners and the hero had to deliver the letters. And unless you dogged them carefully they very often forgot to come back.

One big day was when we hired a boat and went out to get a fishing sequence. We shot our lines and waited in brilliant sun for the fish to get caught. As soon as we started to haul the lines a fog came up. We found ourselves with large quantities of conger eels and no sun. So we decided on an ambitious re-enactment. We would keep the eels alive and re-attach them to the lines next day. We tore home, rousted out the carpenter, built a huge box, inserted the eels and tried to sink it in the harbour. Being wood, it refused to sink. Ballast was the cry. In an excess of zeal, someone seized a 56-lb. weight and flung it into the box. The bottom promptly fell out and the eels swam away.

We decided to do the interiors on the spot. So we looked around and found an old cottage in process of being demolished to make way for a public convenience. We approached the Town Council and suggested that Mousehole had done very well without a public convenience for 500 years, so could they wait another month? They saw our point and let us have the cottage. The local grocer lent us all the bad sweets he had in his cellar for a shop scene. Unfortunately, we didn't know they were bad sweets until one of the characters, after five takes of a sweet-eating shot, asked plaintively, "If it wouldn't be just as good if he ate an apple."

But despite vicissitudes, we got the film finished. Not one of the characters had ever acted before. And after a slow start we found that they could act the average actor off the screen. On returning, I had occasion to get some small part players from an agency. I then discovered that the qualifications for being a film actor in London were to look like a cheese, have served in some obscure Empire police-force, and speak all lines in an imaginary Oxford monotone.

In Bill Blewett, of Mousehole, we found a natural actor whose sense of timing and atmosphere was uncanny. He is certainly one of the foremost film actors of Britain to-day. But of course, he hasn't been to the Academy of Dramatic Art. And he doesn't know any dukes. So I don't suppose anyone will do anything more about it.

Harry Watt

# FILM GUIDE

## *Shorts*

**Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves** (Puppets in Gaspar-colour).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Slatinay and George Pal.
BAKEWELL: Picture House Nov. 15, 3 days
BRADFORD: Elysian Nov. 4, 3 days
CHURCH: Queens Nov. 25, 3 days
HOUNSLOW: Dominion Nov. 1, 6 days
HEATH HAYES: Picture House Nov. 22, 3 days
HALESWORTH: Cinema Nov. 25, 3 days
KIRKCALDY: Carlton Nov. 4, 3 days
MANCHESTER: Riviera, Cheetham Hill Nov. 8, 6 days
MARLBORO: Cinema Nov. 4, 3 days
MURTON: Olympia Nov. 29, 3 days
STH. QUEENSFERRY: Daybells Cinema Nov. 12, 2 days
SHIREBROOK: Empire Nov. 18, 3 days
SANDGATE: Picture House Nov. 22, 3 days
STANTON HILL: Cinema Nov. 25, 3 days
THROCKLEY: Lyric Nov. 11, 3 days
WEYMOUTH: Odeon Nov. 29, 3 days
WREXHAM: Odeon Nov. 25, 3 days

**Beside the Seaside** (Documentary of South Coast resorts).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson.
EASTBOURNE: Winter Gardens Cinema Nov. 4, 3 days

**Cable Ship** (The G.P.O. Cable Ships at work in the Channel).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit.
*DIRECTION:* Stuart Legg.
LONDON: News Theatre, Waterloo Nov. 1, 3 days

**Calendar of the Year**
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*DIRECTION:* Evelyn Spice.
MANCHESTER: Tatler Nov. 29, 6 days

**Coal Face** (Poetic treatment of coal mining).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit.
*SOUND PRODUCTION:* Alberto Cavalcanti.
EXETER: Empire Nov. 14, 1 day

**Cover to Cover** (Documentary of book production).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films.
*DIRECTION:* Alexander Shaw
ACCRINGTON: King's Nov. 1, 3 days
BIGGAR: Cinema Nov. 1, 1 day
BATH: News Theatre Nov. 8, 3 days
BAKEWELL: Picture House Nov. 15, 3 days
CARLISLE: Star Nov. 18, 3 days
DALTON-IN-FURNESS: Co-operative Nov. 19, 2 days
GOOLE: Tower Nov. 1, 3 days
HAZEL GROVE: Marcliff Nov. 29, 3 days
HARROGATE: Royal Hall Nov. 11, 3 days
JACKSDALE: Palace Nov. 25, 3 days
KNUTSFORD: Marcliff Nov. 25, 3 days
MARKET HARBORO: Oriental Nov. 8, 3 days
MURTON: Empire Nov. 11, 3 days
MALVERN: Theatre Nov. 18, 3 days
NEW SILKSWORTH: Hippodrome Nov. 25, 3 days
NEWTON HEATH: Pavilion Nov. 1, 3 days
QUEENSBURY: Victoria Nov. 4, 3 days
SOUTHWELL: Ideal Nov. 11, 3 days
UTTOXETER: Elite Nov. 4, 3 days

**Fishing on the Banks of Skye.**
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit.
BAGSHOT: Princes Nov. 4, 3 days
LONDON: News Theatre, Waterloo Nov. 8, 3 days

**For All Eternity** (A film of English cathedrals).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson
COGGESHALL: Kinema Nov. 1, 3 days
GOLDBOURNE: Royal Pavilion Nov. 29, 2 days
GILESGATE MOOR: Crescent Nov. 3, 2 days
MANNINGTREE: Plaza Nov. 29, 3 days
SEATON: Regal Nov. 3, 3 days

**Forbidden Frontier** (Political situation between Poland and Lithuania).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* World Window Productions
*SUPERVISION:* Sir Philip Gibbs
DARLINGTON: Alhambra Nov. 15, 3 days
LONDON: Monseigneur, Leicester Sq. Nov. 8, 3 days
Monseigneur, Piccadilly Nov. 8, 3 days
Monseigneur, Trafalgar Sq. Nov. 11, 3 days
Monseigneur, Strand Nov. 11, 3 days
News Theatre, Victoria Nov. 18, 3 days
NORTHAMPTON: Exchange Nov. 29, 6 days

**Gentlemen in Top Hats and Gentlemen in Crowns** (Historical survey of European events for the past 40 years).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* A. B. Svensk Filmindustri
*ENGLISH VERSION:* Donald Taylor
POYNTON: Cinema Nov. 8, 3 days

**Grey Seal** (Its life and habits).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*DIRECTION:* John Mathias, Cyril Jenkins.
MANCHESTER: Tatler Nov. 1, 6 days

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Nov. 13th. **Public Services.**
Nov. 20th. **Ecology.**
Nov. 27th. **Winter Games and Physical Education.**

Further details from G.B. Instructional Films Bureau, Film House, Wardour Street, W.1.

**Heads and Tails** (Greyhound racing).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
BRIDGEWATER: Palace Nov. 25, 3 days
BOURNEMOUTH: News Theatre Nov. 22, 6 days
CINDERFORD: Palace Nov. 11, 3 days
CHEPSTOW: Palace Nov. 8, 3 days
DORCHESTER: Palace Nov. 25, 3 days
FARNWORTH: Ritz Nov. 4, 3 days
GUERNSEY: Lyric Nov. 11, 3 days
GORTON: Cosmo Nov. 1, 7 days
ILFRACOMBE: Scala Nov. 1, 3 days
LYDNEY: Picture House Nov. 1, 3 days
LONDONDERRY: Palace Nov. 29, 2 days
MONMOUTH: Picture House Nov. 8, 3 days
NORTHAMPTON: Exchange Nov. 15, 6 days
ROTHERHAM: Whitehall Nov. 1, 7 days
SWINDON: Palace Nov. 22, 6 days
WEYMOUTH: Regent Nov. 1, 7 days

**Heart of an Empire** (Historical significance of St. James's Park and the surrounding buildings and memorials).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson
ANNAN: Picture Palace Nov. 29, 3 days
INVERURIE: Victoria Picture House Nov. 22, 3 days
LITTLEPORT: Regal Cinema Nov. 8, 3 days
PORTAFERRY: Cinema Nov. 25, 2 days
STAPLE HILL: Regal Nov. 8, 3 days

**Hollywood To-day** (Behind the scenes in Film City).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Rupert Grayson
BRADFORD: Grange Nov. 1, 3 days
BRIERLEY HILL: Odeon Nov. 4, 3 days
HINCKLEY: Odeon Nov. 1, 6 days
LANCASTER: Odeon Nov. 22, 6 days
LEEDS: Headingley Picture House Nov. 11, 3 days
LLANDUDNO: Odeon Nov. 22, 6 days
MATLOCK: Cinema House Nov. 4, 3 days
SHEFFIELD: Darnall, Balfour Nov. 4, 3 days

**Islands of the Bounty** (Islands associated with the famous mutiny).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
ALFRETON: Ritz Nov. 10, 2 days
BAKEWELL: Picture House Nov. 18, 3 days
BOLTON: Gem Nov. 18, 3 days
BURNLEY: Andrews Nov. 25, 3 days
CLITHEROE: King's Nov. 29, 6 days
CARDIFF: Park Hall Nov. 1, 6 days
CHURCH: Queens Nov. 1, 3 days
GRIMSBY: Lyric Nov. 1, 3 days
GATESHEAD: Ravensworth Nov. 8, 3 days
HYDE: Scala Nov. 15, 6 days
HARTLEPOOL: Queens Nov. 29, 3 days
HEXHAM: Forum Nov. 22, 3 days
JEDBURGH: Cinema Nov. 10, 2 days
MAYBOLE: Garrick Nov. 6, 1 day
MURTON: Olympia Nov. 29, 3 days
NEWTON HEATH: Pavilion Nov. 1, 3 days
NEWFIELD: Grand Nov. 15, 3 days
REDCAR: Regent Nov. 22, 6 days
STANTON HILL: Cinema Nov. 25, 3 days

**Joie de Vivre** (Cartoon).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*PRODUCTION:* Gross and Hoppin
OXFORD: Scala Nov. 1, 6 days

**Men Against the Sea** (Documentary of North Sea trawling).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Vernon Sewell
DIDSBURY: Capitol Nov. 8, 6 days
EASTBOURNE: Winter Gardens Cinema Nov. 11, 3 days
MATLOCK: Cinema House Nov. 1, 3 days
YEADON: Picture House Nov. 25, 3 days

**Night Mail** (Documentary of the northward trip of the postal special).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Basil Wright, Harry Watt
BAKEWELL: Picture House Nov. 18, 3 days
BRANDON: Cinema Nov. 24, 3 days
COVENTRY: Plaza Nov. 28, 1 day
Alexandra Nov. 23, 1 day
Forum Nov. 14, 1 day
HULL: Tower Nov. 1, 3 days
HUDDERSFIELD: Premier Nov. 4, 3 days
POYNTON: Cinema Nov. 25, 3 days
SOMERCOTES: Empire Nov. 22, 3 days
SALFORD: Princes Nov. 26, 2 days

**Nomad in the North** (Scenic film of Norway).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION & DIRECTION:* C. E. Hodges
GUERNSEY: Lyric Nov. 8, 3 days
JERSEY: Opera House Nov. 15, 6 days
LEEDS: Assembly Rooms Nov. 15, 6 days
Majestic Nov. 1, 6 days
LIVERPOOL: Bedford Nov. 4, 3 days
SOUTHEND: Kursaal Nov. 29, 3 days

**People in the Parks.**
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Paul Burnford
Donald Alexander
MANCHESTER: Tatler Nov. 8, 6 days

**Plane Sailing** (The ins and outs of gliding).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Bosworth Goldman
EASTBOURNE: Winter Gardens Cinema Nov. 25, 3 days
GRIMSBY: Savoy Nov. 29, 6 days
HUDDERSFIELD: Grand Nov. 8, 6 days
ILKLEY: Grove Nov. 8, 6 days
LANCASTER: Odeon Nov. 29, 6 days
LONDON: News Thea., Victoria Stn. Nov. 15, 3 days
MARLOW: County Nov. 15, 3 days
PUDSEY: Picture House Nov. 11, 3 days
SOUTHEND: Kursaal Nov. 8, 3 days
WIMBLEDON: King's Nov. 1, 6 days

# Shorts (*Contd.*)

**Rooftops of London** (Documentary).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Paul Rotha

| | |
|---|---|
| BAWTRY: Palace Cinema | Nov. 19, 2 days |
| BENTHAM: Picture House | Nov. 1, 2 days |
| DARNELL: Lyric | Nov. 11, 3 days |
| GLASGOW: New Bedford | Nov. 8, 6 days |
| La Scala | Nov. 8, 6 days |
| LEICESTER: Trocadero | Nov. 29, 3 days |
| LEAMINGTON: Bath Cinema | Nov. 15, 3 days |
| LONG EATON: Scala Cinema | Nov. 4, 3 days |
| MORECAMBE: Whitehall Picture Hse. | Nov. 11, 3 days |
| STAFFORD: Picture House | Nov. 11, 3 days |

**Secret Hiding Places** (Priest holes to be found in English country houses.)
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Granville Squiers

| | |
|---|---|
| BASINGSTOKE: Waldorf | Nov. 21, 7 days |
| MANCHESTER: Withington, Scala | Nov. 1, 3 days |
| MATLOCK: Cinema House | Nov. 25, 3 days |
| NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: Picture House, Jesmond | Nov. 18, 3 days |

**Secrets of the Stars** (Spotlight on British stages and studios).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Argyle British Productions Ltd.

| | |
|---|---|
| BRADFORD: St. Georges | Nov. 1, 6 days |
| BIRMINGHAM: Rink, Smethwick | Nov. 7, 7 days |
| BARNSTAPLE: Gaumont Palace | Nov. 22, 3 days |
| GLOSSOP: Empire | Nov. 22, 3 days |
| HEREFORD: Odeon | Nov. 28, 4 days |
| HANLEY: Regent | Nov. 15, 6 days |
| LEEDS: Scala | Nov. 1, 6 days |
| Coliseum | Nov. 1, 6 days |
| LEICESTER: City Cinema | Nov. 15, 6 days |
| Picture House | Nov. 8, 6 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Plaza | Nov. 15, 6 days |
| MANCHESTER: Corona, W. Gorton | Nov. 25, 3 days |
| NOTTINGHAM: Hippodrome | Nov. 22, 6 days |
| SALISBURY: Gaumont Palace | Nov. 22, 6 days |
| WEYMOUTH: Regent | Nov. 8, 6 days |
| WOLVERHAMPTON: Queens | Nov. 1, 6 days |

**Seventh Day** (How London spends its Sunday).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* A. P. Barralet

| | |
|---|---|
| MANCHESTER: Tatler | Nov. 22, 6 days |

**Six-Thirty Collection** (Documentary of the West End sorting office).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
*DIRECTION:* Edgar Anstey, Harry Watt

| | |
|---|---|
| AIRDRIE: Empire | Nov. 8, 3 days |

**Snow Water** (Water power in the Swiss mountains).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* H. Dreyer

| | |
|---|---|
| HARROGATE: Odeon | Nov. 1, 6 days |
| HULL: Langham | Nov. 11, 3 days |
| Savoy | Nov. 8, 3 days |
| West Park | Nov. 29, 3 days |
| LONDON: News Thea., Victoria Stn. | Nov. 8, 3 days |
| MORECAMBE: Tower | Nov. 28, 4 days |
| NEWPORT, I.O.W.: Odeon | Nov. 22, 3 days |
| NOTTINGHAM: Grand | Nov. 1, 6 days |
| NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: News Theatre | Nov. 1, 6 days |
| WARRINGTON: Odeon | Nov. 1, 6 days |

**Statue Parade** (Historical treatment of London statues).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Paul Burnford and Ralph Keene

| | |
|---|---|
| BELFAST: Lyric | Nov. 1, 6 days |
| BAWTRY: The Palace | Nov. 29, 2 days |
| BENTHAM: Picture House | Nov. 18, 3 days |
| COLWYN BAY: Arcadia | Nov. 1, 3 days |
| LONDON: Strand Cin., Agar St. | Nov. 15, 3 days |
| Monseigneur, Piccadilly | Nov. 22, 3 days |
| Sphere, Tottenham Ct. Rd. | Nov. 25, 4 days |
| NORTH WHITTINGTON: Oxford | Nov. 12, 2 days |
| PORTLAND: New Regal Cinema | Nov. 18, 3 days |
| TRANMERE: Coliseum | Nov. 18, 3 days |

**Stolen Heart** (Silhouette film).
*PRODUCTION:* Lotte Reiniger

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Rd. | Nov. 8, 7 days |

**Strange Adventures** (About Africa).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning

| | |
|---|---|
| ASHFORD: Odeon | Nov. 22, 3 days |
| BARROW: Coliseum | Nov. 29, 3 days |
| BOURNEMOUTH: News Theatre | Nov. 29, 3 days |
| BATTLEFIELD: Mayfair | Nov. 15, 3 days |
| BECKENHAM: Regal | Nov. 1, 7 days |
| BRIGHTON: Court | Nov. 1, 7 days |
| CLAPHAM: Imperial | Nov. 1, 7 days |
| CHESTER: Music Hall | Nov. 4, 3 days |
| EDINBURGH: Ritz | Nov. 1, 7 days |
| Lyceum | Nov. 1, 7 days |
| GRAVESEND: Plaza | Nov. 1, 7 days |
| GRIMSBY: Savoy | Nov. 8, 5 days |
| ISLINGTON: Annex | Nov. 15, 3 days |
| LOWESTOFT: Odeon | Nov. 22, 6 days |
| READING: Savoy | Nov. 15, 6 days |
| SOUTHPORT: Palladium | Nov. 7, 1 day |
| SWINDON: Palace | Nov. 1, 3 days |
| WEMBLEY: Wembley Hall | Nov. 15, 3 days |
| WINDSOR: Empire | Nov. 21, 4 days |

**They Shall Not Pass** (Documentary of the Civil War in Spain; English commentary).
*DISTRIBUTION:* International Sound Films
*PRODUCTION:* Ministry of Public Instruction in Madrid

| | |
|---|---|
| OXFORD: Scala | Nov. 1, 6 days |

**This Other Eden** (A trip down the river Eden, in Westmorland).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph

| | |
|---|---|
| BRENTWOOD: Palace | Nov. 15, 6 days |
| CREWE: Plaza | Nov. 1, 6 days |
| ECCLES: Regent | Nov. 11, 3 days |
| HEREFORD: Odeon | Nov. 25, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Empress | Nov. 22, 6 days |
| Gaumont Pal. (Anfield) | Nov. 22, 6 days |
| LONDON: G-B Movietone News, Shaftesbury Avenue | Nov. 8, 7 days |
| PETERSFIELD: Savoy | Nov. 11, 3 days |
| WALLASEY: New Brighton, Trocadero | Nov. 4, 3 days |

**To-day We Live** (The depressed areas of Wales).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Ralph Bond and R. I. Grierson

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Rd. | Nov. 15, 7 days |

**We Live in Two Worlds** ("A film talk by J. B. Priestley.")
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* G.P.O. Film Unit
*DIRECTION:* Alberto Cavalcanti

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Rd. | Nov. 29, 7 days |
| MANCHESTER: Tatler | Nov. 15, 6 days |

**Wheel and Woe** (The evolution of the motor car).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Liberty
*DIRECTION:* W. G. Duncalf

| | |
|---|---|
| BARNSTAPLE: Gaumont Palace | Nov. 18, 3 days |
| BISHOP'S STORTFORD: Regent | Nov. 18, 3 days |
| BRIDGEWATER: Palace | Nov. 11, 3 days |
| BIRMINGHAM: Harborne Picture Hse. | Nov. 1, 3 days |
| CHESTER: Gaumont Palace | Nov. 22, 6 days |
| CIRENCESTER: Picture House | Nov. 11, 3 days |
| CHIPPENHAM: Gaumont Palace | Nov. 1, 3 days |
| HAMILTON: La Scala | Nov. 11, 3 days |
| HEREFORD: Odeon | Nov. 21, 4 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Corona | Nov. 15, 6 days |
| LYDNEY: Picture House | Nov. 11, 3 days |
| NORTH SHIELDS: Princes | Nov. 15, 6 days |
| PETERSFIELD: Savoy | Nov. 22, 3 days |
| PUDSEY: Picture House | Nov. 15, 3 days |
| SALTAIRE: Picture House | Nov. 1, 3 days |
| WINDSOR: Royalty | Nov. 7, 4 days |
| WEYBRIDGE: Odeon | Nov. 22, 6 days |
| WEYMOUTH: Regent | Nov. 29, 6 days |

# Foreign Films

**Le Dernier Milliardaire** (French).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* René Clair
*STARRING:* Paul Ollivier, Raymond Cordy

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Everyman, Hampstead | Nov. 1, 7 days |

**The Hague** (Dutch documentary).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Film Society
*DIRECTION:* Otto van Neijenhoff, F. Kal

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Rd. | Nov. 22, 7 days |

**Kadetten** (German).
*DIRECTION:* Georg Jacoby
*STARRING:* Albert Basserman

| | |
|---|---|
| OXFORD: Scala | Nov. 15, 3 days |

**Liebesmelodie** (Austrian).
*DIRECTION:* Tourjansky
*STARRING:* Marta Eggerth, Leo Slezak, Hans Mosen

| | |
|---|---|
| OXFORD: Scala | Nov. 22, 6 days |

**Nitchevo** (French).
*DIRECTOR:* Jacques de Baron Celli
*STARRING:* Henry Baur, Marcel Chantel

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Berkeley | Nov. 1, indefinitely |

**The Pearls of the Crown** (French).
*DIRECTION:* Sacha Guitry
*STARRING:* Sacha Guitry, Jacqueline Mogan

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Curzon | Nov. 1, indefinitely |

**Le Roman d'un Tricheur** (French).
*PRODUCTION:* Cineas
*DIRECTOR & STAR:* Sacha Guitry

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Academy | Nov. 1, indefinitely |

**Sous les Toits de Paris** (French).
*DIRECTION:* René Clair
*STARRING:* Albert Prejean

| | |
|---|---|
| OXFORD: Scala | Nov. 8, 6 days |

**Squadrone Bianco** (Italian).
*PRODUCTION:* Roma Films
*DIRECTION:* Augusto Genina
*STARRING:* Fosco Giachetti, Anthony Ceuta, Fulvia Lanzi

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Academy | Following *Le Roman d'un Tricheur* |

**Tales from the Vienna Woods** (Austrian).
*DIRECTION:* Georg Jacoby
*STARRING:* Wolf Albach-Retty, Leo Slizak, Magda Schnieder

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Studio One | Nov. 1, indefinitely |


## IMPERIAL TOPS AGAIN

**Out of a total of 34 shorts shown on these pages Imperial once again takes the lead in recording.**

**5 are Foreign**
**10 are British**
**19 are Imperial**

**which shows that all other British studios put together recorded 10, and Imperial alone recorded 19.**

**This is our steady average month by month.**

**Documentary producers, do you want any further proof of the superiority of our services to you?**

**IMPERIAL SOUND STUDIOS**
**84 WARDOUR STREET GER 1963**

# Why Reversal Film?

"In the reversal process the exposed image is developed and then the developed silver is dissolved in a bleaching bath which oxidises the silver. This leaves behind the undeveloped silver bromide which was not affected by the developer because it was not exposed to light. *After a fresh exposure to light* this remaining silver bromide is developed in its turn and gives a positive."★

By regulating the amount of this "fresh exposure to light," the processing of Ciné-Kodak black-and-white film compensates for all but extreme errors in the original exposure and results in even film density.

Two series of widely different exposures are reproduced on this page. The first was processed without compensating exposure and shows wide differences in density. The second was processed with compensating exposure and shows evenness of density in spite of great differences in exposure.

The Ciné-Kodak exposure-compensating system is exclusive to Ciné-Kodak Reversal Film processing. It has saved hundreds of thousands of feet of 16 mm. and "Eight" pictures that would otherwise have been spoiled by exposure errors. Get your exposures as right as possible! But rely on the great latitude of Ciné-Kodak Reversal Film *plus* its exclusive automatic compensating exposure to compensate for exposure errors which, in spite of fine judgment and the best available exposure meters, are, sooner or later, bound to occur.

★ Extract from "Photography", by Dr. C. E. K. Mees, Kodak Director of Research. —G. Bell & Sons Ltd., London, 7/6.

## CINÉ-KODAK REVERSAL FILMS (Black-and-White).

**CINÉ-KODAK PANCHROMATIC FILM (16 mm.).** *The standard film for outdoor cinematography.*

**CINÉ-KODAK SUPER SENSITIVE PANCHROMATIC FILM (16 mm.).** *Its high speed makes it indispensable for artificial light work, and for work in weak daylight.*

**CINÉ-KODAK "EIGHT" PANCHROMATIC FILM (8 mm.).** *A superfine-grain film, for the Ciné-Kodak "Eight".*

**CINÉ-KODAK PANCHROMATIC SOUND RECORDING FILM (16 mm.).** *Perforated on one side only.*

All the above are reversal films, sold at prices which include processing and return postage.

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WORLD FILM NEWS

AMATEUR AND TECHNICAL SECTION

# The use of Film in Education

*by*

Paul Burnford, A.R.P.S.

Education by film differs from all other forms of teaching, for it depends on the efforts of two individuals, namely a teacher and a technician. Successful results call for a close collaboration between them throughout.

The teacher must become fully conversant with and understand the powers and limitations of the film, and should, if possible, make a study in filmic education entirely. Similarly the technician should acquire a knowledge of the subject being undertaken, and should concentrate on educational work, as the differences between educational and entertainment or other types of films are considerable. In any case the taking on of both the technical and educational side by one person should be avoided, as it is difficult to give attention to both.

The main construction of the teaching film differs considerably from the story film, and a somewhat specialised technique is necessary. The purpose of the latter is to tell a story to the audience, and it accomplishes this through the visual and aural senses. Details of construction such as cutting, lighting or camera position should only be perceived by the audience subconsciously, and in no case should they be aware of them.

Variations of lighting or camera position can be utilised to great benefit in the educational film, but only for purposes of emphasising details. The camera position must never be varied for artistic reasons, but only where it is required to bring into prominence less conspicuous objects. For example, it might be necessary in a film showing the workings of an engine to accentuate some particular part, such as the moving of the valves, or the turning of the crankshaft.

The lighting must be such that the objects being photographed are shown up to the best possible advantage, and no suggestion of atmosphere must be present. The lighting can be made to accentuate any particular part of an object by applying greater brillance thereto.

The black and white values of the film are far greater than is commonly supposed. Black and white is far easier to look at and has not the distracting effect of colour. This is especially so where the objects are moving, as colour in motion is difficult to appreciate.

Nevertheless, colour can be of very great importance where the instructional value is directly or partly dependent on actual colour values, such as in botany or medical studies.

In a medical film, especially those dealing with diseases of the skin, colour is essential, as a number of diseases are only distinguishable by their actual colour differences. Imperfect colour can do more harm than good, and it is very important to verify that the system used is accurate.

The advantage of a sound or silent film would depend on the type of subject being undertaken.

The silent film should be utilised where natural sounds are of little or no value, where no descriptive speaking is required, or where more satisfactory results can be obtained through the use of titles.

Titles should always be very short and concise, and of the simplest wording. The running time should be carefully considered. Repetition or gradual enlarging of titles greatly emphasises any point.

Various adequate 16 mm. silent projectors for ordinary classroom use can be purchased for under thirty pounds. Unfortunately, there is no sound-on-film projector marketed under £60, but a machine at this price is, of course, very satisfactory. However, as soon as demand increases, a reduction in price is inevitable. Sound on disc equipment can be purchased much cheaper. This method has the advantage of being able to attach sound to almost any silent projector, but unfortunately is not so versatile or portable as the sound-on-film system.

The classroom or lectureroom should be kept as dark as possible. Too much light not only distracts attention but is rather damaging to the eyes. Where light is necessary for making notes, the light should not be allowed to reach the screen.

The teacher will become accustomed to fixing up and threading the projector, which on modern machines is a very simple process. Care should be taken to project at the correct speed (on sound-on-film projectors the speed is fixed).

Where there is plenty of available projector light, a white screen is most satisfactory, as the same briliancy is observed from any position in the room.

When the projector is equipped with a 2″ lens, which is the usual standard, it should be placed at the back of the room. The 2″ lens is so designed that the audience should be seated at the same distance from the screen, and on a level with the projector, to observe the picture in its correct proportions. But as it is impossible for everyone to be seated together, the placing of the projector at the back insures that no one sees the picture under size.

It is essential for the teacher to become fully conversant with and understand all the necessary factors for competent showing of the film. Absolute proficiency must be observed in the various technical details, otherwise the result can cause more harm than good.

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# HOW TO BUILD SETS—No. 4

## *Lighting and Camera Suggestions*

by H. CHEVALIER, F.P.S., A.S.E.

Reaching the final article of this series, it is necessary to depart slightly from the art side to the consideration of lighting arrangements. To obtain a more complete grasp of the technique employed I must ask you to allow a digression and examine the work of a professional cameraman. In this way it will be possible to study the problem and the cameraman's final solution, and adapt the methods to our own needs.

The cameraman I have chosen is Mutz Greenbaum, for his remarkably clever lighting on Victor Saville's *Storm in a Teacup*. This picture is generally released this month and will thus provide a splendid opportunity to see the film and study the results. The details given are correct for I worked on the production and obtained the facts at first hand.

One of the sets in the picture depicts the editor's office of the *Baikie Gazette*: first as a day shot and secondly as a night shot, so providing excellent comparisons. A plan of the office is shown in A, comprising two rooms divided by a glass screen. On the left-hand side is the editor's office containing a roll-top desk with a typewriter on top, a table in the foreground, a second table, bookcase, three chairs and a stove.

This room is again subdivided across the centre by a glass screen at ceiling height, extending about 2 ft. below the ceiling itself (which is naturally not there) supported by a couple of posts.

The second and rear room supposedly contains a printing press. Both rooms have a window on the right-hand side, about 6 ft. in height.

As shown in the plan, the camera track is arranged on the left-hand side to allow a full view of the room, with the editor sitting at the desk and the reporter at the table, following a close shot of the editor at the desk.

The preliminary action takes place between the two actors, followed by the entry of the office boy and the editor's wife, and the subsequent exit of the reporter. That is the problem from the lighting point of view, and the solution by Mutz Greenbaum is as follows.

First it is usual to light each main prop (furniture, etc.) individually to obtain the required composition balance. Following this fundamental rule, on the left-hand side we have a Junior (Mole Richardson 2,000 watt lamp with a marine lens) on the overhead spot rail, fitted with a double silk diffuser focused on the typewriter. Now a double silk diffuser cuts off about 75 per cent of the light; therefore the light when it finally reaches the typewriter is very soft or highly diffused. Next comes a Junior with a small snoot or metal tube for controlling the area of light and a single wire diffuser focused on the foreground table. A wire is merely a piece of windowlight, or cellophane strengthened by wire mesh. The third Junior is fitted with a small snoot and single wire and spread over the right-hand side floor and wall.

### Foreground lighting

On the foreground cross spot rail we have three Juniors, one with a small snoot focused on a set of shelves standing against the partition, another with a single wire also on the same object from a different angle, while the third has a small snoot and single wire and is focused on the door.

The background spot rail has one Junior (J) with a small snoot (SS) focused on the floor, another J with SS focused on the door, and a third J with a large snoot (left-side) focused on the back of the arm chair near the right-hand side wall.

From the right-hand side spot rail we have one J with large snoot and single-wire (SW) focused on the bookcase on the left-hand side wall, and one J flooding the printing room back wall with light. Continuing with the floor equipment we have first of all a triangle or portable triangular platform, 4 ft. high, carrying a Senior (M.R. 5000 watt lamp), on a stand about 14 ft. high and fitted with an LS and SW focused on the side flat leading to the door through which the editor's wife enters. Another J on a high stand with an SW is also focused on the door from the same side, at a slightly different angle.

Close to the left hand a J, on an H stand with an SS and SW, is directed on the actor sitting in a chair at the roll-top desk. To prevent the light being too hot, a net is inserted in the beam to cut down the intensity of the light hitting the actor. A small spot (250 watt lamp) with 2 W also provides front light for this actor.

### Lighting the actor

But in addition to this light we have the following lighting directed upon this actor. One spot light on a high stand to the right of camera, one spot on an HS with an SW for back light and two Js, one on the right-hand side spot rail with a large snoot and one on the foreground cross spot rail with an LS and single silk both providing top light.

To light the actor seated at the table, we have one spot on a high stand providing back light, there being already a sufficiency of front light, another spot on a high stand providing three-quarter back light, and one J on the right-hand side spot rail with an LS and SW providing top light.

The remainder of the lighting is arranged for the entry of the editor's wife and office boy. This consists of one J in the right foreground on a high stand with 2 Ws half-netted off the left-hand wall near the door. A second J close to the right-hand wall on a high stand with an SS and SW also netted off the wall near the door, and a third J on a high stand with SS and SW focused on the door itself.

To complete the lighting we have a small spot down in the corner by the partition, focused on the under side of the 2ft. cross ceiling partition, a photoflood lamp known as a Basher (because it bashes or throws the light in a certain direction) focused on the right-hand end of the partition, together with a J on a high stand with an SW outside the window also focused on the same area.

### A silhouette

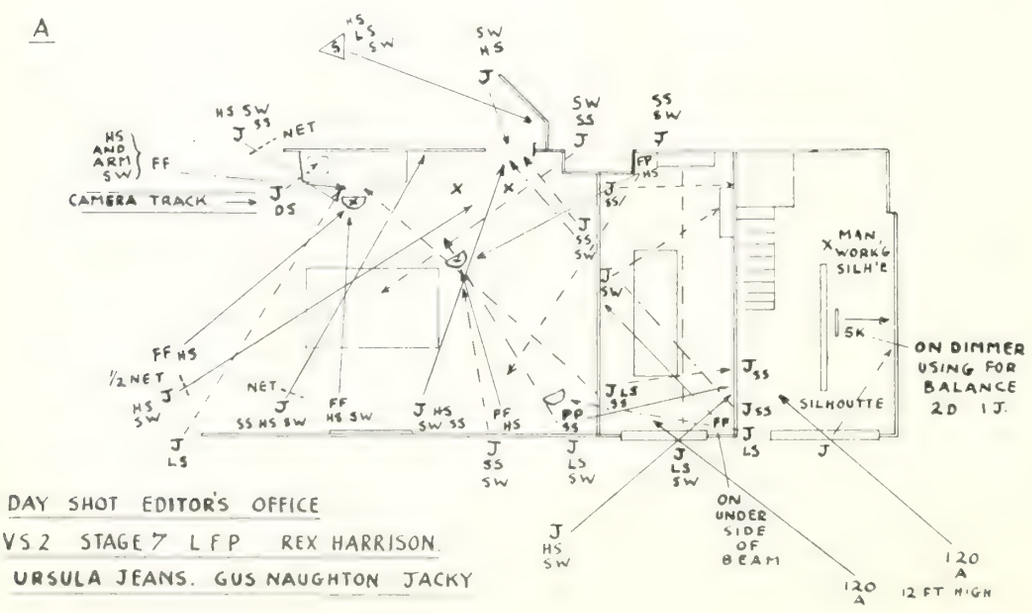
To provide a silhouette of the machine working a three-ply cut-out is erected in the second room and back lighted by a 5000 watt lamp in a shallow dish-shaped reflector known as a 5K pan dimmed to the amount of brilliance required. Sunlight is provided by two 120 ampère Mole Richardson H1 arcs, usually referred to as 120-H1's. These are at an angle outside the window on a spot rail 12 ft. high and are situated about 8 ft. apart. Each is focused separately through a window and they give the hard shadows and bright lighting similar photographically to sunlight.

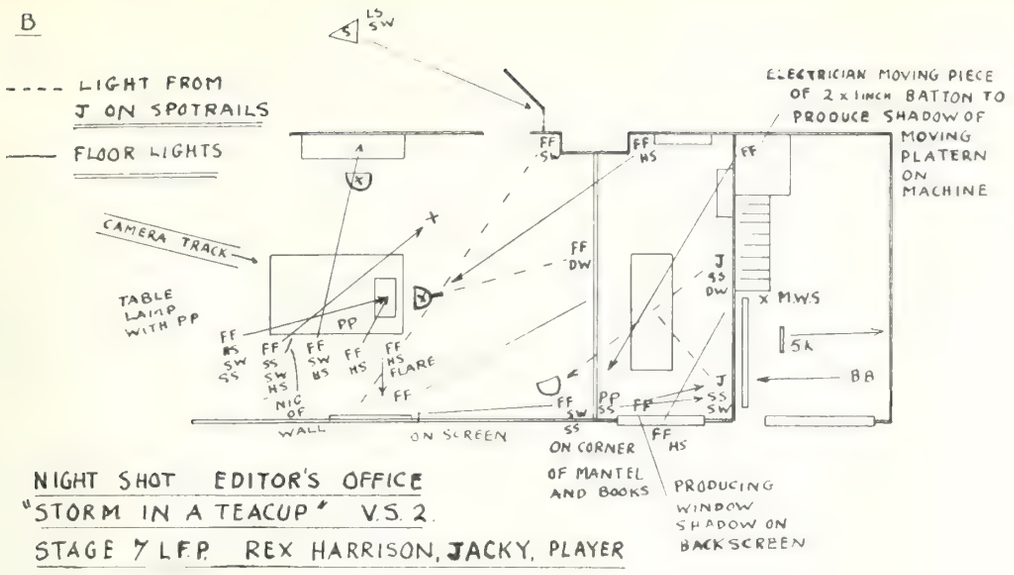
That completes the day set up and for the night shot we have an entirely different arrangement of lights to provide the necessary contrast.

The new set up is shown in B. Here the camera track is arranged to start with a close-up of the reporter reading at the foreground table, then track back, giving view of room and another player entering the office and the office-boy seated at the editor's desk.

On the overhead spotrails we now have only two Js in use, both situated on the rear crossrail. The first has an SS and double wire and is focused on the chair against the LHS wall.

A






The second also has an SS with an SW and is focused on the background table from a different angle. However we also have two 250 watt spots with an SW fixed on the spotrail, one against the LHS wall and focused on the wall above the stove. The other with a DW provides backlight for the reporter seated at the table.

For floor equipment we also substitute spots for Juniors in this way. To the left of camera and providing front light on the reporter we have a spot marked FF on a high stand with an SW and a small square snoot.

To provide front light for the player another FF on a high stand with an SW and SS is arranged to the left with the light niggered or shaded off the wall to the right of the player.

The office-boy seated in the editor's chair with his feet on the desk receives light from another FF on a high stand with an SW, and a final FF on a high stand provides extra top light for the reporter when he leans over the table typing.

But here is something you may not know: on the table is a reading lamp which is supposed to be providing illumination for the reporter to work by. Now this lamp, if it only contained say a 100-watt lamp, would photograph badly; therefore a photoflood lamp is used in place of the usual lamp. Finally on the RHS in the corner, between the bookcase and the out-jutting wall, stands an FF on a high stand providing three-quarter backlight for the reporter.

To complete the lighting of this set-up we have an FF on the floor beside the foreground table, fitted with a flare (or a piece of three-ply with an irregular cutout pattern, giving an uneven patch of illumination) focused on the stove.

On the floor, behind the chair and against the RH wall is hidden an FF with an SS and SW focused on the corner of the mantelshelf and the books arranged upon same. While beside the stove another is hidden on the floor to light the front and under side of the cross screen.

Immediately below the first RH window we have a basher, containing a photoflood lamp with an SS lighting the RH corner of the glazed partition and another FF so arranged to produce a window shadow in the same place, while outside the window an FF on an HS lights a further portion of the partition. In the rear room behind the glazed partition the three-ply silhouette has been moved close to the screen and is now illuminated by two lamps. First a Bon Bon, or 2,000 watt spotlight so placed to light the end having the moving platten portion and casting a heavy shadow on the glazed screen, together with a 5K pan brilliantly lighting the back wall. To ensure that a moving shadow can be seen in the camera an FF is arranged at any angle through the upper part of the screen allowing an electrician to move a piece of two by one inch batten backwards and forwards in unison with the movement of the platten. For lighting outside the LH door the same 5,000 watt Senior is used with LS and SW.

This completes the lighting arrangements for the night shot and forms a highly interesting example of day and night set-ups, as they are called in the studio.

Careful study of the diagrams and the foregoing details will help the reader to a better understanding of the lighting requirements of sets under different conditions. A visit to the local cinema to see this lighting on the screen will be of far greater service than any other method of explanation, providing as it does the opportunity to compare one against the other. Space will not permit the inclusion of camera hints this number, but these will appear next month.

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# Hints for Projectionists

1 Stand the projector on a firm support, and not on a rickety table.

2 Leave the operator plenty of room by surrounding the projector with a barrier of chair backs.

3 Do not connect the projector to the same circuit as that of the lighting in the room, because should you blow the fuses—bang goes the lights as well!!

4 Connect the projector to a power plug, or alternatively across the fuses in the nearest distribution box, which are usually found in all domestic installations.

5 Never use an adaptor in a lampholder, or attach the projector leads to a loose end of flex, this is just asking for trouble.

6 The operator should not smoke on duty.

7 No films whatever should be left exposed.

8 If the film take-up fails, do not allow the film to run and collect on the floor. Stop at once, pick up the film and re-start only when you are satisfied that all is in order.

9 Do not block up the entrance doors with chairs, to leave the door open is the safest way.

10 Always appoint someone present to be responsible for operating the lights, and always keep a torch light handy.

11 And if you DO have a fire, DON'T throw water over the non-flam film, because it simply WON'T burn, but throw it over the spectators instead, because they MIGHT.

# Answers to Correspondents

J. T. Inverness (and others) re non-flam film.

The whole problem depends strictly upon the local attitude as to whether a slow burning film is inflammable or otherwise. The situation is quite confusing, and an emphatic and final ruling is urgently awaited from the Consultative Committee set up by the Home Office.

Should a visiting fire inspector ask you to give him a "cut" from the centre of a reel, you should advise him that it is not your film to burn, and I am sure he will appreciate the underlying point. He is correct in so asking should he have any reason to suspect that a non-flam leader or title has been added to an otherwise nitrate film, and of course that has been known to happen many times before this . . . a careless mistake on somebody's part. This however cannot occur on 16 mm. film, which is all "slow burning" or "non-flam."

Reply to S. T. Cornwall.

The alternating current hum you are experiencing is undoubtedly due to a faulty electrolytic condenser in the exciter lamp circuit. You should be able to purchase one locally.

DAVID MYERS

# FILM SOCIETIES AND CLUBS

**FILM SOCIETY OF GLASGOW:** Hon. Secretary, D. Paterson Walker, Esq., 127 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, C.2.

The Society's preparations for the ensuing season are well advanced. The season commenced on the first Monday of October and meetings will be held probably fortnightly in Cranston's Picture House, Glasgow, until the middle of April, 1938. The experiment of having a Repertory Season which was instituted last year will be continued as it was an undoubted success. More than 50 per cent of the members attended both Repertory and Ordinary meetings. As in previous seasons lectures will be arranged for.

It is expected that the membership will again be between 900 and 1,000 and the subscription will be unchanged.

**ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, R. Howard Cricks, Esq., F.R.P.S., 35 Russell Square, London, W.C.1.

The Royal Photographic Society's Exhibition of Kinematography, arranged by the Kinematograph Section, is to be opened by Lord Strabolgi on Saturday, November 13th, at 3 p.m. The theme is to be "The Film as a Social Force".

Films to be shown are to be selected from the entry in the Film Competition, which this year included for the first time classes for 35mm. shorts. Films representative of every type of production—professional, amateur, and scientific—will be included.

The lectures arranged in conjunction with the Exhibition cover colour, sound, art direction, and lighting, while an ever-popular feature is the demonstrations of new apparatus. Admission to meetings is by invitation of a member or by ticket obtainable from the Secretary.

The Exhibition itself is to include a representative collection of standard and sub-standard apparatus, and stills from the leading films now in production.

It will be open daily from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m., except during lectures. Admission is free.

**WOLVERHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY:** Membership Secretary: Miss D. Roston, 60 Great Brickkiln Street, Wolverhampton. Programme Secretary, E. L. Packer, Esq., 58 Himley Crescent, Wolverhampton.

Season started Wednesday, October 20th, at West End Cinema, Coleman Street. Subscription 10*s.* 6*d.* for six meetings.

**BOGNOR REGIS FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Miss L. Cornish, "Southernhay," New Barn Lane, Felpham, near Bognor Regis.

Production of *News from Hollywood* has been completed—a 400 ft. comedy on 16 mm. The shots have been very consistent in exposure due to "Highlight Exposure."

The Newsreel department report that they have 500 ft. of local events, always of importance in the annual Public Show.

The Society's first documentary film, of local *Arts and Crafts*, is being produced, and if successful at the public show will be followed by a series including *Farming*, *Spinning* and *Weaving*.

**THE IRISH FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Liam O'Laoghaire, Esq., 41 South Circular Road, Portobello, Dublin.

For the present season subscriptions are being raised to one guinea so that adequate revenue will be available for a really representative programme of some of the world's finest films. Extensive publicity is essential for such a project in Ireland, where a vague dissatisfaction with the commercial cinema exists, but where constructive alternatives have yet to be envisioned and carried into effect. It is here that the Film Society hopes in time to be able to help in crystallising the discontent and showing the achievements of other countries to awaken the spirit of emulation.

The projected programme for the season includes *Hey Rup*, *The Road to Life*, *Turksib*, *Nibelungen*, *The Wonderful Lie*, and it is also hoped to secure a copy of Denis Johnston's *Guests of the Nation* for showing. Lectures will be given by the Hon. Secretary and Geoffrey Dalton and a member of the English Documentary Groups. The season opened on October 24th.

**SCOTTISH FEDERATION OF FILM SOCIETIES:** Hon. Secretary, Forsyth Hardy, Esq., 54 Brantsfield Gardens, Edinburgh, 10.

During the past year the Federation has operated a successful scheme of co-operative booking. A new development of activity along this line is the organisation of pre-viewing facilities whereby film society officials far removed from London may see, in advance of making their selections for the season, films which might be suitable for inclusion in their programmes.

At a week-end session in London in August representatives from various parts of Scotland viewed twenty-one one-, two- and three-reel shorts and the greater part of seven feature films. In addition several members also saw films currently showing at the Continental cinemas. All this on the hottest week-end of the year!

This "viewing" service to societies is regarded as one of the most fruitful results of active co-operation between the Scottish societies. A further preview was arranged in Edinburgh in September, when a number of shorts and Dreyer's *Vampyre* were shown.

**THE GUILD OF CATHOLIC TEACHERS' FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Terence Grant, Esq., The Catholic Institute, Newton Place, Charing Cross, Glasgow.

The Society commenced its winter session on Thursday, September 2nd, when all the members listened to a short lecture on "Colour." This was accompanied by a showing of the *Corpus Christi* film and parts of *The Assumption Procession*. The Society is holding a show of films in St. Aloysius Hall, Glasgow, on November 18th and 19th. The programme will include the Millhill missionary films of India and Uganda, in addition to educational and other films.

**OXFORD FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, E. F. Bowtell, Esq., 105 Victoria Road, Oxford.

The Society will hold its next three meetings at the Scala Cinema on November 14th and 28th, and December 12th. Duvivier's *The Golem* will be presented on November 14th.

**ACE MOVIES:** Hon. Secretary, Channon Wood, Esq., 15 Openview, S.W.18. Studio: 90 High Street Mews, Wimbledon, S.W.19.

Excellent progress is being made on the production of the modern version of a medieval legend referred to in previous reports, work on the fourth set being now under way. It is hoped to finish the picture early in the New Year.

The Ace documentary unit, under the direction of Channon Wood, is at present working on a film for the Kensington Housing Trust Ltd. This commission was the result of an introduction by the Amateur Services Club.

It is anticipated that the next public showing of Ace films will be next February–March and it is not too early to start booking reservations.

**WEST MIDDLESEX AMATEUR CINE CLUB:** Hon. Secretary, E. H. Whittleton, Esq., 39 Derwentwater Road, Acton, W.3.

Details of the programme for the new session are now available. They include lectures on lighting, sound synchronisation, and colour cinematography by well known lecturers. Plans are also in hand for a demonstration of television and sound film apparatus; a visit to a modern cinema, and a film studio; and exchange visits with other clubs. Shooting began on October 19th.

**WEST ESSEX FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, F. J. Philpott, Esq., 7 Wellington Road, East Ham, E.6.

As satisfaction was not felt with regard to the quality of the rushes of the scenes already taken for the film in course of production, *Pot of Basil*, it has been decided to re-shoot on 16 mm. film.

**CAMBRIDGE FILM PRODUCTIONS:** 5–7 Portugal Place, Cambridge.

In view of the publication of the Second Report of the League of Nations on Nutrition, *Vitamins*—recently completed by Cambridge Film Productions—may be of more than specialised interest.

It shows that vitamins are no newfangled ramp. Scurvy—due to lack of vitamin C—has been the curse of sea-faring nations for hundreds of years, though detailed knowledge of it is the product of a search during the last thirty years. *Vitamins* describes how scurvy was studied and its curative vitamin identified. It describes also how rickets is prevented by Vitamin D.

It was an experiment by Sir Frederick Hopkins in 1912 which concentrated attention on minor dietary deficiencies. The method he used is demonstrated in the film and the result plotted step by step on a graph. This is valuable as a reconstruction showing a scientific method, though it claims no accuracy in detail. Other laboratory sequences were, however, made under the supervision of a scientist of international repute, and great attention has been paid to scientific accuracy.

*Vitamins* was directed by Geoffrey Innes and is his first documentary sound film. Arrangements for distribution are almost complete and will be announced in *World Film News*.

**THE FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Miss Barbara Frey, 31 Poland Street, W.1.

The first performance of the Film Society will be held at the New Gallery Kinema, at 2.30 p.m. on Sunday, November 14th, when the programme will include *The Last Night*, directed by J. Raisman (director of *The Soil is Thirsty*) and the Spanish documentary *Land Without Bread*, directed by Luis Bunuel.

Remaining performances will be held on December 5th, January 16th, February 6th, March 6th and April 3rd. Subscriptions for the season 19*s*., £1 12*s*. 6*d*., £2 10*s*. Special reduced rates for students and film technicians.

**CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, 36 Great Smith Street, S.W.1.

On October 13th the Society gave its first display of the season at Millicent Fawcett Hall, Westminster. *Great Awakening*, a Catholic social film and the Society's latest production was screened for the first time. Sound is introduced by a chorus which intones parts of the Pope's Encyclical, 'Rerum novarum,' as a background for a series of impressionistic shots of various aspects of industrial life.

A Unit has been formed for teachers, and special lectures will be given at the Society's rooms throughout the season. Catholic teachers are invited to write to the Assistant Secretary at the above address.

Mime classes have recommenced at the Interval Club, 22 Dean Street, Oxford Street, W.1, every Monday evening, and are open to both sexes. New members may join at any class.

The next public display will be at Millicent Fawcett Hall, Tufton Street, Westminster, at 8 p.m. on Wednesday, November 3rd. Tickets 1*s*. may be had from the Assistant Secretary.

**THE RICHMOND FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, C. Jolliffe, Esq., 20 Cumberland Road, Kew.

The Society has just been formed to enable its members to see documentary, experimental and foreign films in Richmond. The season's activities will probably consist of five sub-standard sound programmes, the first of which was held on October 26th in Richmond.

If sufficient support is forthcoming, a more ambitious programme of activities will be launched, including, it is hoped, lectures, discussions, visits to studios, etc. All interested are invited to write to the Hon. Secretary for details.

# A RE-WIND and EDITING BENCH

## by George Cooper

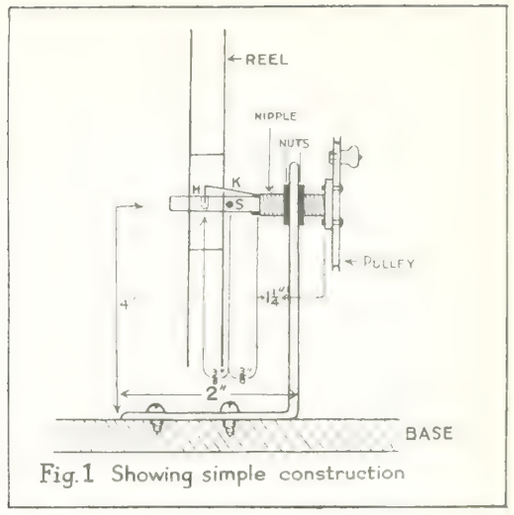

Fig.1 Showing simple construction

The professional cinema projectionist uses a hand-driven rewind for inspecting and repairing films, and the rewind and inspection bench about to be described here is designed on the same lines and can very easily be constructed for only two or three shillings and will do all that is likely to be required of it.

The device is composed of a base 16 inches by 8 inches by seven-eighths inches. I used thick plywood, which is very strong and takes on a very nice finish after being sandpapered. Two pieces of strap iron bent at right angles to form uprights, a piece of quarter-inch shafting about six inches long, two brass electric nipples and nuts (nipples to be half-inch external diameter), two 2-inch Meccano pulleys, a piece of spring belt (Meccano), four nuts and bolts half-inch long, four rubber headed tacks, and one safety pin.

The two pieces of strap iron for uprights are bent as shown in the drawing. The width of these is not so very important, but I used one inch. Then in each, drill a hole large enough to accommodate the brass nipple. The nipple is then mounted in the upright and fastened with a nut at either side. A little shellac paint applied to the inner surfaces of the nuts will prevent them from working loose. The nipple forms a very serviceable bearing for the shaft.

Cut the shaft to the size shown and drill holes for the pin and reel stop. The shaft is now put into the bearing and the brass safety pin cut and bent as shown. The pin is then fastened into the shaft.

The end of the pin at "H" must ride freely in the hole so that when the reel slot passes over it, it will spring up and down. The other end of the pin is bent over at right angles and forms a stop which prevents the shaft from floating back and forth. It should not be too snug, however, for some play is necessary.

The stop "S" may be a bolt or pin, and after it is positioned as shown may require some filing to allow the reel to go over the spring and be held firmly. If the reel does not go on far enough, file off some of the stop until the proper fitting is secured. A kettle cover knob is bolted to one of the pulleys to serve as a crank handle.

This system has proved highly satisfactory under actual working conditions. The spring belt is placed around the other pulley and serves as a brake. Very little tension is required on this pulley and it may be increased or decreased by tightening or loosening the eye hook on the base, or it may be slipped off for fast winding of film.

The bench will do for both the 8 and 16 mm. films. Both types of reels are the same in respect to the stops, the only difference being in the reel thickness and diameter.

Regarding the bench. The distance between the uprights can be made any reasonable figure but about 12 inches is suitable for 8 mm. reels and splicer, and around 16 inches for the 16 mm. reels.

A coat of shellac or varnish for the base, some enamel for the uprights, rubber headed tacks under the base for feet and the job is done.

### B.A.S.C. ANNOUNCEMENT

All films on the *British Countryside*, *Architecture*, and *Scottish Youth Hostels*, to be entered for the British Amateur Services Club contest must be received by November 30th at:—

British Amateur Services Club,
34 Soho Square,
London, W.1.

Mr. John Grierson and Mr. Robert Flaherty will judge the films.

In accordance with a previous notice in *World Film News*, an extension of time, until early in the New Year, has been given on the *Hygiene* and *Home Planning* films. Definite closing date to be announced later.

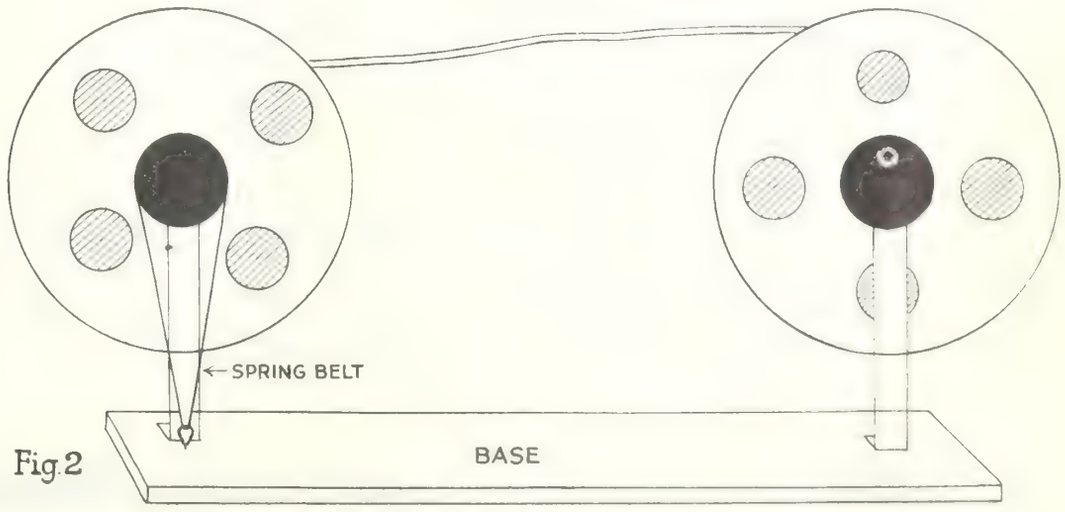

Fig.2

# NEW GBI FILMS

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FACTS ABOUT FISH • THE SOWER

*Write or telephone for the Autumn Supplementary List of G.B.I. Films and for details of Special showings of EDUCATIONAL FILMS on SATURDAY MORNINGS in LONDON and THE PROVINCES to*

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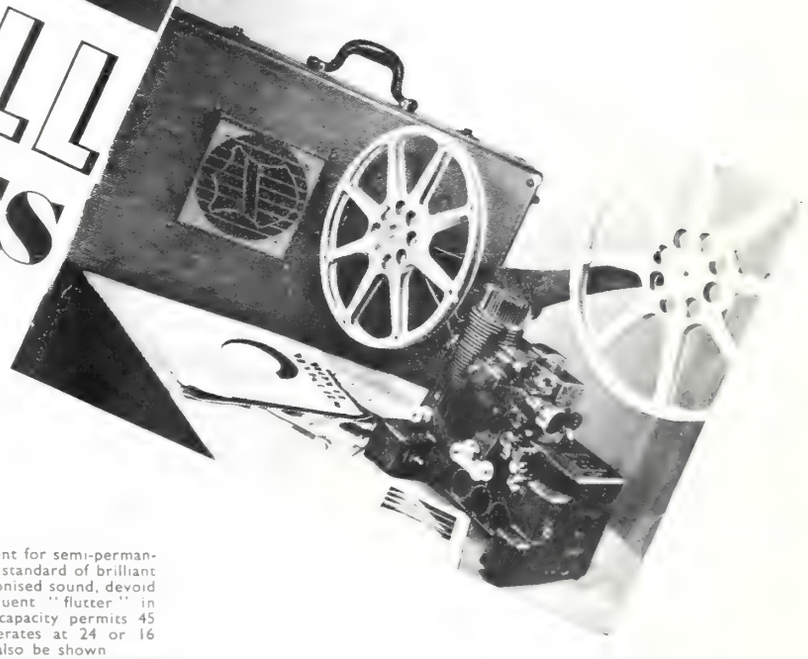

And, of course, it is not restricted to science—Drama, sport, comedy, travel, singers, men of letters, the variety is immense—and their application to schools, institutes, churches, homes, etc., for entertainment or instruction is as varied.

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**SIXPENCE**

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# world FILM news

## CIRCUS — STAGE — SCREEN

**WHO KILLED the VAMP?**
**GARBO and the NIGHT WATCHMEN**
**ALL the WORLD LOVES a WINNAH**
**GUIDE TO NEW and GENERAL RELEASE FILMS**

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DECEMBER

"TWO FILMS THAT WILL DO NOTHING BUT GOOD"

*News Chronicle*

## CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

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DIRECTED BY BASIL WRIGHT

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Brilliantly produced and directed. *Daily Film Renter*

Interesting, disturbing, informative and poetic. *The Spectator*

Worthy of attention throughout the Country. *The Cinema*

An enormously moving and persuasive piece of film-craft. *The Observer*

A remarkable film . . . jars the social conscience. *Daily Herald*

Will strongly appeal to everyone who sees it. *New Era*

## THE SMOKE MENACE

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DIRECTED BY JOHN TAYLOR

Capable direction and first-rate photography. *Daily Film Renter*

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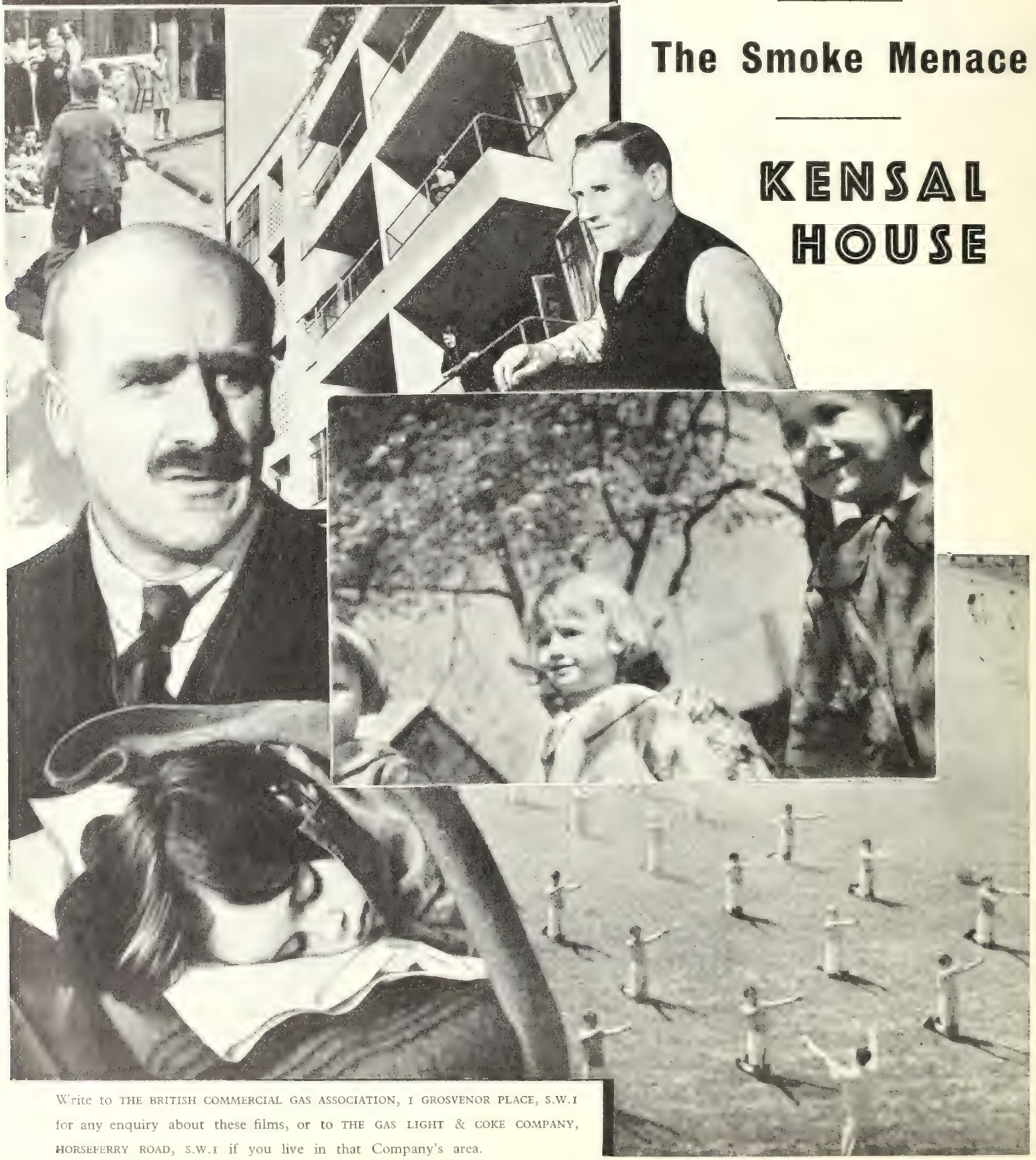
# CHILDREN AT SCHOOL

## The Smoke Menace

## KENSAL HOUSE



Write to THE BRITISH COMMERCIAL GAS ASSOCIATION, 1 GROSVENOR PLACE, S.W.1 for any enquiry about these films, or to THE GAS LIGHT & COKE COMPANY, HORSEFERRY ROAD, S.W.1 if you live in that Company's area.

# WHO KILLED THE VAMP?

## *by* Basil Wright

And by vamps I mean your full-blooded, sexy, slinky, unscrupulous creatures, compounded half from the bad woman of Victorian melodrama and half from the odalisques of the naughty French novels. We haven't seen them for many a long year, and their names come down the chromium corridors of film-history merely as whispered echoes from the past. Theda Bara, Nita Naldi, Lya de Putti, Marie Prevost—their very names are an incantation. Most of them were out-and-out wicked, and lured the hero towards a fate worse than death—from which he was usually rescued in the nick of time by his fiancé (blonde), his wife (brunette), or his parents (pure silver). The vamps, with their raven hair and luscious mouths, represented all the allurements of illicit sex, the dreams that husbands try to avoid and adolescents pray for; and their ultimate downfall solved the spectator's guilty conscience. He had his personal cake and could eat the bun of respectability at the same time. How the women must have hated them—hated them for their luscious contours swathed in black velvet, hated them (and particularly Theda Bara) for wearing garments made from ropes of pearls. Bara, indeed, would have made Cleopatra look pretty silly, and had she ever jumped into a vat of vinegar the censor's hair would have risen like quills upon the fretful porpentine.

(*Continued over the page*)

*Top left is Theda Bara, the famous vamp who played Cleopatra in* 1918; *and above, Claudette Colbert, the new-style Cleopatra*

*He's weakening! Miss Lilyan Tashman, one of the most famous of vamps*

*Myrna Loy—"the vamp in all her pristine viciousness"*

Censors never liked vamps. Censors were on the side of the wives. But in spite of all that, I do not think it was the censors who killed the vamps. It was the decadence of the post-war generation. They just couldn't take it. Bara as Salome, Naldi's famous stomach dance, de Putti's Medusa-lips, were too bravely, too conspicuously uncompromising.

So the long decline began. First of all they went realistic, and called the vamp a prostitute, and Gloria Swanson made a big hit in *Sadie Thompson*. This was a very good film, and no one realised yet its direct rivalry to the vamp. Then came Clara Bow as Mrs. Glyn's *It Girl*. She was grand too; but "It" was not quite the same thing as the vamps had. For, as Seldes points out, the *It Girl* represented an essentially lighthearted and almost moral point of view as regards sex. With the vamp, sex was nothing if not serious.

THEN someone discovered that the audience could stand seeing the hero throwing things at the heroine, and this in turn gave them the idea of making the vamp a figure of fun. She was transferred to the two-reel comedies; the velvet robes were slammed in the doors of taxi-cabs, and the pearls were ripped off by funny men in false moustaches. The generation of Mae Busch and Thelma Todd arose. And with them came the successor to the *It Girl*—the platinum blonde, represented *in excelsis* by Jean Harlow. You remember, perhaps, the great scene in *Hell's Angels*, where, dressed in the most exiguous of *robes-de-chambre*, she excused herself from the hero's presence, in order to put on "something more comfortable." Could Bara or Naldi have done it? A thousand times No.

The vamps had no chance. Their successors, from Swanson to Harlow, had all the talent, from sex to slapstick. Moreover, the vamps were stumped by Sound. In mime and gesture their seductions were easily accomplished; but when they had to speak, a raspberry hovered dangerously near. They put up a stiff fight, however, and by changing their tactics they kept a hold on films. Central Europe sent its quota, and Pola Negri (surely a spiritual vamp) kept a tattered flag flying on the wrong side of the fence.

In one series of films—the Warner Oland *Fu Manchu* cycle—the vamp reappeared in all her pristine viciousness in the person of Myrna Loy. Fu Manchu is now, alas, a detective, and, although Myrna Loy is my favourite comedy actress, I can never see her without a pang of regret for those earlier days when with sadistic knife and masochist lips she tortured the pure-minded young victims of the Tong.

But at last,

> "Her strong enchantments failing
> Her towers of fear in wreck
> Her limbecks dried of poisons
> And the knife at her neck"—

the Queen of Air and Darkness finally capitulated before the majestic and undeniable onslaught of Mae West.

HERE was the apocalypse. Here, in direct negation to the vamp tradition, stood, or rather swayed, the ideal of every stout middle-aged woman. *Au fond*, Mae West has much in common with E. Miffin (Mrs.), Nathaniel Gubbins' voluptuous charwoman. She is the Bermondsey beldam as she would like to see herself reflected in her husband's eye. She is the only future the chorus girl can look forward to. She is the common denominator of sex for all the men you see in a good pub. She is the Pink 'Un and *La Vie Parisienne*, but she can be left about in the drawing room, for at least she is something all women can instinctively admire, even when in her they are realising that the barmaid may be a rival. She is, in fact, the negation of the vamp.

"Come up and see me sometime"—that crooning, cynical, luscious voice could never issue from the constricted throat of Theda Bara. It is all far too practical and far too sane. It could, in fact, happen. The fact has finally slain the dream. Pearls, velvet, divans, they have their practical uses and their price at the stores. The untold riches of the vamp have crumbled into dust; the long cigarette holder and the beckoning sinuous arm are the prerogative of Hal Roach. In denying them the movies lost a great quality.

So perhaps we should be grateful to Seldes for explaining that Theda Bara's real name was Theodosia Goodman, and that she came from Cincinatti. It makes the nostalgic pangs a great deal easier to bear, and we may with greater comfort subside (only too metaphorically) into the capacious bosom of the Golden West.

# EDITORIAL

## *Manners of Debate*

By the time this number appears much of the committee work on the Cinematograph Films Bill in the British Parliament will have been done and discussion of particular amendments over. Whatever the final decisions may be, it is worth recording that in the second reading debate the institution of Parliament came out with great distinction. The subject of the Bill is highly technical and complicated, involving many warring interests and only half concealing many warring tempers. Interests as divergent as the American renters, the British circuit exhibitors and the independent producers had pestered the press and the House with their pleas, some of them with a desperation born of a fear of annihilation; and this was bound to confuse the majority of Members. They could hardly, we thought, be expected to catch the balance of a situation which had defied the trained observers in the film industry itself. It was not the least of the compliments paid to our expert observers and to this paper that what they had written and we had published became the backbone of the debate.

The debate did not demonstrate any mass enthusiasm on the part of members. The fact that the cinema affects the minds and views of twenty million constituents every week, was not reflected in the attendance. Save the President of the Board of Trade and his colleague of Overseas Trade, no Minister was present. The Dominions Office found no interest in a Bill which must affect Empire relations closely. Education and agriculture showed no special concern for a medium which has served them eagerly and could serve them more. At times the House might have been counted out.

The bald head of the Leader of the Opposition was, one might say, the only gracious tribute among the seniors to the importance of the occasion.

But still, this Parliamentary thing worked. Wading laboriously for five hours through eighteen mostly dull speeches, it got all the right things said and all the right emphases laid, and something like a wise balance of opinion suggested. A painful and polite process it may be, and it is difficult to imagine the average lunatic of the film world being patient enough to endure it, but on this example Parliament had nothing so much to give the film industry as an appreciation of its methods and its manners. Even if the Films Commission does not emerge from the Committee—and this paper has pleaded for it from the first—either the Government or the film industry must come sooner or later to create its like.

## *Film Institute—Xmas Greeting*

Eighteen months ago Mr. Oliver Bell was introduced as the new manager of the British Film Institute. We were, we confess, gently sceptical of anyone quickly clearing up the infernal mess into which the Institute had got itself. One Governor of the Institute was bold enough to agree with us, if not as to the scepticism, at least as to the mess. Old readers will particularly remember how we inveighed against the "pelican" tactics of the Institute. We told it to do something before it permitted itself the pretence of representing anything so important as the educational and cultural aspects of the film.

In eighteen months, this Mr. Oliver Bell has made an historic difference. A few unregenerate elements still exist, and still, at times, the Institute puts itself in the position of trying to represent where it has done no work to deserve. But it is now well thought of; its Committees do useful work; its encouragement of the film in educational circles, if unspectacular, is as persistent as its finances allow; its cheap publicities and braggings of earlier days have given place to quiet and considered services of research and information; there is a progressive air about its policies which inspires wider support among workers in the field; the personnel of its Governors, like the personnel of its management, commands greater confidence. The Institute is founded, and is working, and will be with us for good. This is worth recognising, particularly by those trade bodies who, suspicious in the past, may not have followed its later growth.

*World Film News* prides itself in being the organ of the progressive wing of the educational and cultural cinema. But it is glad to make these acknowledgments and particularly glad to congratulate Mr. Oliver Bell on the canny and essentially right policy he has pursued.

He will pardon us, however, if we encourage his institution to keep on the move. The National Film Library is, for all the Institute may pretend, still very much of an empty name. It needs more money and a clear unequivocal policy which we can support. Relations with other groups in the same field, like the Joint Committee of the Department of Overseas Trade, Travel Association and British Council, the Imperial Institute, the Substandard Cinematograph Association and, not least, the documentary and amateur film movements, are still undefined. We hope, there is no remainder in this of the foolish old hope of magically swallowing the lot. Though representations have been made, and completely understood, no Governor to-day represents the educational and documentary film interests which have been responsible for creating, and even now are maintaining, the very field which the Institute seeks to represent. Here, again, we hope there is no remainder of the previous policy.

Indeed, with all the compliments paid, there are many things to be looked to, and the secret of each solution is the development of a true spirit of co-operation on the part of the Institute. We have every belief that the Governors and Mr. Bell will make this spirit effective in the Institute's decisions.


# World Film News

AND TELEVISION PROGRESS
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Cover Still: Eddie Cantor in *Ali Baba Goes to Town*


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# HOLD your HOSSES!

# the CIRCUS is Coming to TOWN

THERE are two circuses. One descends from the spectacle of Rome: the other from the patches of Punchinello. One fills the arena with glittering spectacle: the other is of the hedgerows. The arena safely housed in palaces of stone and lime has all the obvious efficiencies of the Metropolitan Police; the travelling ring has all the careless bravery of the strolling player. One could go on developing this distinction, becoming subtle and perhaps even philosophical, but it is not worth while. The important point for the circus fan is that this fact of two circuses means two fevers.

There is first the Spring fever. When the first buds are springing in the hedgerows the circus fans know that in the by-ways of the English counties caravans are already trundling the road. Green and red and yellow paint is being geometrically applied to truck wheels. Costumes are being patched. Animals are being put through their paces in the practice rings. Elephants stagger the waltz. High school horses trip the minuet. Sea lions brush up *Yankee Doodle* on the trumpets. The smell of the circus—the acrid smell from cages, the scent of hay from the stables, and the old passing smell of paraffin from the flares—float down from the lanes of the countryside.

The second fever is the Christmas one. When the nights are dark and holly and mistletoe have appeared in Oxford Street, we know that the arenas are being set up in Olympia and the Agricultural Hall. Bertram Mills is dusting his grey topper, and Carl Hagenbeck is cracking his whip.

Something like a big top is being hoisted. Fresh sawdust is being sprinkled—a carpet for horses, elephants and zebras. Performers are rehearsing. The fairy-lights of Oxford Street swing in the breeze to remind us that trapeze artists are trying out their new tricks. A man in the gutter selling comic noses reminds us that the clowns are trying out their oldest antics once again. A cracked trumpet by a theatre queue brings a whiff of the harsh music which will usher in the biggest show on earth to a hundred rings in a few days.

The Circus fever is on!

I SUPPOSE the modern circus takes its lead on animals from Rome. Lions, tigers, elephants were the stand-bys of Nero's manager, and they are the mainstay of Carl Hagenbeck's. They appeal on two scores. One is the fascination of fear. Few of us, even in these presumably sophisticated days, can resist the vicarious thrill. It is part of the stock-in-trade of most drama—the heroine and the circular saw—the face at the window, the haunted house, Karloff—in all these we share terror. So too with the lion-tamer. We share his bravery, but we imagine his fear. The excitement is of real tooth and claw. There is no deceptive film of celluloid between.

A few superior persons hurl the word sadism at the circus audience. But in this connection I am always reminded of that disciple of St. Augustine who was dragged to the circus against his will. He shut his eyes and refused to look at the performance. Off his guard for a moment, he sneaked a look. He was fascinated. He kept on looking. He came back many times.

The second appeal of the animals is skill. I have seen school teachers breaking their hearts teaching children to read and write, to acquire skill in crafts, to run, jump and hurdle. How much more baffling it must be to teach a horse to waltz, or a monkey to drink tea with rudimentary manners. It is clever, bafflingly clever. And we come, year after year, to marvel.

* * *

The first heart-aches of most small boys are on account of the Queen of the Circus—the ballerina—the lightest, daintiest, fluffiest little lady of two continents. She is dressed in a ballet skirt of white or pale pink. She is blonde. She has a blue ribbon in her hair, and provided that you are not too near the ring-side, she is a vision of loveliness. Her horse is a dazzling white. She is the second turn on the bill. Six pencils of white light follow her ride

round the ring. She rides sideways without a saddle with one hand raised in salute. She rises and trips a simple step on the broad back of her horse. She lightly leaps ribbons festooned from the centre of the ring. Then she disappears beyond the curtain, but stays as a picture in the minds of little boys. She is a symbol of the make-believe of the circus.

THE figure common to all circuses is the clown. No circus, in city or village, can be a circus without the clown. His appeal is something which hardly bears talking about. It is so real, yet so elusive. It is a mixture of the broadest slapstick and the subtlest gesture, of heartrending bravery and the deepest pathos. I did not see the greatest clowns. I did not see Grock. I did not see the Fratellini. I did not see Whimsical Walker. My younger and provincial world is one of Pimpo, Doodles, Toto, Noni and their lesser lights. The greatest clown I ever saw (and I refuse to believe that there was ever a greater) was Otto Giebling.

On one occasion I had to change trains in the Middle West. Cole Brothers Circus was in town. I had just time to see part of the show before my train time. The circus had started when I took my seat. A high wire act had craned all necks. All breaths were held as flying figures flashed white against the dun of the canvas. White pencils of light followed them as they sailed perilously through the air, performing some daring thrill for the first time in any ring. There was a gasp of relief as the white figures slid down the ropes to pose in the floodlit ring while the applause rang out. The next turn was a wild affair of Indians, of fire and feathers and paint. While the braves pranced and whooped, my eyes drifted to the edge of the ring, where a solitary figure was kneeling with his elbows on the ring. For a while he was absorbed by this pageant of colour and movement. Then he became bored. He shifted restlessly from one knee to the other. He leaned his head first on one hand, then on the other. He wriggled and turned. I became fascinated and can remember no more of the Indian antics.

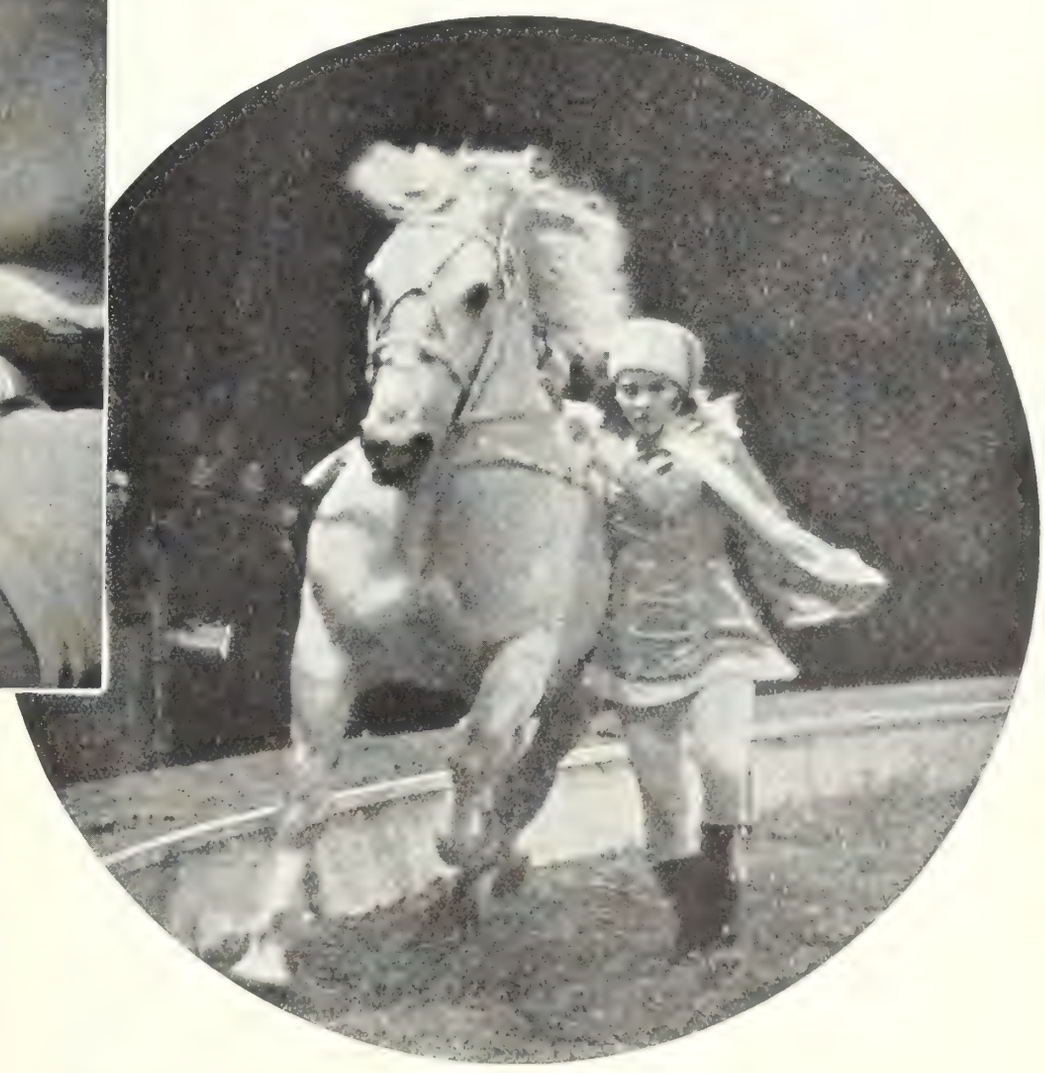
Slowly from an inside pocket he produced a deck of cards. He shuffled them. Slowly and systematically he laid them out for a game of patience. He was alone. The Indians no longer existed. The circus had ceased to exist. He was alone in a lonely world. Only once did he lift his eyes and that was just before he cheated. That one glance convinced him that he was alone and he quietly changed the position of two cards.

I have seen Giebling since. Once I saw him in a three-ring circus. His pathetic figure, ill-clad in clothes made for someone else, made its way to a vacant ring. Quietly he sat cross-legged in the centre and took a large sheet of newspaper from that capacious pocket and made a fire. He lit the fire and warmed his hands at its brief flame. For a moment he was all the poor souls in the world who are looking for fires at which to warm their starved hands. It wasn't the least bit funny, but it had a flash of the humanity of all great clowns.

Giebling too was an example of the preposterous incongruity associated with the clown. On occasions he will become a vendor of potted plants. Early in the evening he appears with a modest fern in a small pot. He tries in vain to sell it to a lady by the ringside. At the next interval he appears with a slightly larger plant and mutely appeals to the same lady. Again he turns back—the rebuffed salesman. At each appearance he carries a still larger plant. But always that pathetically unsuccessful appeal. His last appearance is made tottering under a gigantic palm tree. He is an uproariously comic figure as he staggers up to the lady of his particular attentions and offers what must be the-very-last-one-I-have-lady-and-cheap-too-lady.

If I see a clown just half as good as Otto Giebling this Christmas I shall be well pleased.

THE Circus is in town—the biggest show on earth—the big top is hoisted—the clown's paint is fresh—the ballerina's spangles are glittering—high-spirited horses are pawing the sawdust—the elephants are stamping—the high wires are taut—roll up! Roll up!—the ring master, sprig and erect, is in the ring—Ladies and Gentlemen!—in-tro-dooc-ing—The Circus!



*Photographs, Dorien Leigh*

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Otis Ferguson

Don Herold an

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Alistair Cooke

ANY book that spreads the fame of Cecelia Ager is a good book, for Mrs. Ager wields the deftest and shiniest stiletto among critics East and West of the Atlantic. Marxist clownings in and about the English language are one half of the virtue of the brilliant *Variety*. Make no mistake, the other half is Cecelia.

With the light-hearted commission to talk about the gowns, corsetry, millinery and make-up of the stars, one by one she spikes them down clean between the flounce and the furbelow. The snobbsy wobbsy elegance of Constance Bennett; the clear-eyed level-headed silent sufferer of yore, which is Irene Dunne; the right dressy self-sacrifice of Kay Francis; the deafening poise of Joan Crawford, whose inferiority complex is betrayed at the last moment by the dress that fits just a teeny weeny bit too tightly across the hips; the odd dressing of Jessie Matthews, whose deep, wide-V neckline gives every knob a break; Ann Harding, so nice when scared to death but, when natural, so harrowing; the smooth mask of Dietrich with interesting hollows in her cheeks and a pronunciation of 'yes' with a rising inflection. Then sweetly—still in that column for ladies devoted to make-up and whatnot—the piece about Robert Taylor which begins: "It used to be the girls who took the baths in pictures . . . it used to be the girls who stuck the flower between their teeth . . ."

How nice it is to know that Oxford, our Oxford, is even now "quivering to the way he wraps his robe close to his splendid chest and

# S to R COOKE

## opportunity to emselves under nn Grierson sur- of Cecelia Ager, Graham Greene, other critics as- night watchman brazier.

beautifully modelled loins . . . sighing as he ties his belt snug to his waist with dashing disregard of the buckle . . . learning how he coaxes with his own two hands his lustrous black hair into that proud clean-swept line." So on, each week, writing like an angel and shaming every critic who, with weightier commission, does less for criticism and less for sanity.

Otis Ferguson, critic of the *New Republic*, one had better know too. Like most Americans, and dearie me ad box office et ad nauseam, he is a little too anxious to be at one with the popular arts, a little too anxious not to be associated with high purpose and the intelligentsia, and terribly ashamed of crusades in a country whose maelstroms of dirty little crookery and shameful little snobberies would honour the most naïve. On the other hand, and it is the bigger hand, read his Louis-Schmeling fight for the most vivid bit of prose that ever edged its noble shoulders through the sniffling mediocrity of screen writing.

Don Herold of the *Commentator*, born at a cost of $15, and now registering in a foreword his desire to be buried with the epitaph "Breath takes a holiday" is, thank heaven, better than his foreword. With the exception of our own Russell Ferguson, we have nobody to touch him in riding a film down, casual like. "Good sakes alive, I don't have to hire anybody to drag me to the verge of nervous breakdown: I *live* there"; "Lon Chaney is Clark Gable to some people: Clark Gable is Lon Chaney to me": "It is all a business with Al Jolson: if he were manufacturing pants he would be at it just as hard": "I may like Eddie Cantor in his old age, when he wears down"; "The name Annabella is a mistake: it sounds as if it belonged to a muscle bound dancer in a carnival tent"; or, of a Noel Coward film, "It starts in Oscar Wildey and finishes up Eugene O'Neil screwy, with Noel Coward talking to himself over his shoulder." That is the Don Herold style: personal, familiar, amusing and with a capacity to read fast which is the self desired peak of American journalism. But wings over not so much, and on pretending it.

The worst of political reviewing is that the two very different standards of æsthetic (long term) and practical or political (short term) judgment, get mixed—and never so mixed are they as with Robert Forsythe of the *New Masses*. *Chapaiev* is a hat in the air and the long boredom of mere huzzas; but, when the red rag is not displayed before the bull, which unfortunately is most of the time, there is no one in the collection more penetrating. No one has written more intelligently in praise of Mae West, or described the foibles of England more gaily, or so exquisitely thought of comparing our Mr. Charles Morgan—Sweet Thames run softly—to Cecil B. De Mille. A social sense is a good slave but a bad master when it comes to the measurement of art and the difference probably in a sense of humour. Robert Forsythe has three parts of that and is, therefore, blessed among bolsheviks; but if you count salvationism the dope of criticism, he presents an interesting demonstration of the brightened eye, the tautened muscle, and the feverish gesture of hallelujah.

The weight of the book lies between this Chapaiev worst of Robert Forsythe, and Don Herold's snappy best, and is represented, let it be whispered, by our own Robert Herring, Graham Greene and John Marks, with considerable aid from Meyer Levin of *Esquire*. And, ironically, Alistair Cooke when he is not admiring the Americans too much to forget to be English, is, as we all know, not so bad at that. In fact when the good writing and the wisecracking are over, there is relief in criticism which is plumb old-fashioned, good and thoughtful, with a high wall behind it: even if, or perhaps especially if, it has sixteenth-century knobs to it. One thinks of Otis Ferguson's brilliant description of Joe Louis and the sentence "Speed and weight, without the special slugger's leverage in the muscles of the shoulder and back, are no good." The Americans have all the speed and, to be true, some of the weight; but when it comes to special slugger's leverage one is inclined to remember what Graham Greene did the other day to Louis B. Mayer.

No, Lejeune is not in the book. This paper has had its good clean fun with Lejeune and no hard feelings, one hopes. But let it be recorded here, as Cooke's introduction should have recorded, that a selection of professional film criticism is silly without her. We all raise our voices periodically to say that she is everything by starts and nothing long, that she is apt to go off at half cock, that she is sometimes, women fashion, no gentleman, and can't get into a scrap without pulling someone's hair and being sorry for it. Breath takes a holiday for Don Herold, but no such nonsense about our Lejeune, not in fifteen years. She has been, of all the film journalists, the best journalist, and of all the critics, this side or that, she has done the greatest single service to the cause of the cinema. Heaven knows, knowing Lejeune, that it may be all Lejeune's fault, but in case it isn't, Alistair Cooke is not going to get by without this balancing word.

THANKS to him nevertheless for the first opportunity to put the critics themselves under the scalpel and for the fine writing and of such variety he has gathered in. Cooke, as ever, is not so much Catholic in his taste as Anglo Catholic, with a foot in both camps and doubt between. One sees how he admires the American wisecracking style and how, possibly, he does worse and falls for it. Indeed one prays that the emigration to America, which he records in his foreword so cheerfully for him and so sadly for us, may not turn out to be a symbolic surrender to the twinkly lights which, though they brighten the path of film criticism, do not make the substance of it. That substance at its best is a kind of leadership which, dashing about decoratively to attract attention, must still be judged by where it leads. It is all very well for the watchmen to sit by their fires and gaze at Garbo and the night stars; it is also their job to be round and about looking to the property. But if all the critics did that, *World Film News*, I fear, would have to keep them—and not forgetting Mrs. Don Herold who, her husband blithely tells us, is too weighty a bride these days to carry across the threshold.

*An extract from Otis Ferguson's review of the Louis-Schmeling fight is printed on pages* 24 *and* 25.

# "It's not Acting— it's just Rehearsing"

## is how Arthur Sinclair, noted Irish player, describes screen acting, in an interview with Henry Adler.

"AHCTING?" repeated the short sandy-haired man, and the soft caressing voice dropped to a sonorous bass. "Ahcting is a gift of *God*. So what would I be doing *talking* about ahcting?"

The tired dreamy blue eyes perused the image in the long mirror, and Mr. Sinclair put a little more black on the right eyebrow. "I've been acting all my life. Y'know I was at the Ahbbey Theaytre with Lady Gregory and Mr. Yeats and Mr. Synge. (Such a nice quiet gentleman! If he hadn't been stricken down with illness, he'd have been writing greater plays than even he did. Y'know it was Mr. Yeats met him in Pah-ris and told him to go home and write about Ireland.) We were a quarter century ahead of our times at the Abbey, and Mr. Synge, he was haff a century ahead. We tried to forget about ahcting when we were on the stage. Well, ye can't *really* do that. Ye can't be forgetting an audience altogether now. But we were after pretending that the stage was a room without one of its walls. We would be turning our backs to the audience, and pausing, and slurring our speech. All that, y'see, helps to bring out character. But when people come and are after asking me questions about my timing and pauses an' all that, I don't know how to be answering them. I can *do* it. It comes natural, *feels* right, to be holding a moment," and with the actor's interest in his own craft, Mr. Sinclair watched himself in the mirror holding a fragment of Time, "but I can't be talking about that sort of thing. So don't you be after making me seem to be laying down the law. Some interviews about me have made me *blosh*. If there's one thing I hate it's being egoteestical.

"Now in feelms," he said, putting on his waistcoat (for there is but half an hour to his entrance in *Wanted for Murder*), "ye can't be pausing, or slurring your speech, or moving about. Film audiences won't stand for it. They want everything quick, quick. Mind ye, it's good in some ways. Ye've got to use your wits when you go to a feelm these days. And the feelms, they've woken the theaytre up too. Look at *Wanted for Murder*. It's modern, realistic, nothing like *The Worst Woman in Town* sort of show that the brothers Melville used to put on, with all that pomdiddy pom-pom stuff," and with grandiose gesture he imitated the sonorous basso profundo of some green-limed Jasper.

"But ye know there are too many changes all at once these days. It's not healthy. There we were for hundreds of years, getting used to one change before the next one came along. And now everything's changing all the time. Ye know, I think we've all gone crazy in the last thirty years. Give me the old books, Wilkie Collins, and Dickens, and Bulwer Lytton, and the days before the War.

"It's true audiences wouldn't be making the fuss nowadays they did when *The Playboy of the Western World* was first put on in Dublin and New York. Of course, the opposition there was organised. Ridiculous it was. I saw a man outside the Abbey Theaytre handing round tickets to toughs so that they could go inside and make a row. The first night in New York wasn't so bad—just a hiss or two, you know. But the second night, we could hardly hear ourselves speak. So one of us went on after the first act and said: 'Ladies and Gentlemen, since we don't think you should be deprived of hearing the first act through the uproar of a few, we'll be playing it to you all over again.' And we did!

"Of course, all that fuss did the play a world of good. We got to the theaytre one day and saw newspaper placards outside: *Arrest of Irish Players*. Nothing of the sort had happened really. Some publican had sued us for immorality. All we had to do was to go in court for a few minutes. What was after worrying the publican was the boy and girl being together at the end of Act One. Our counsel said: 'Here is the script. What does it say? The girl says: "May God give you a good rest till I call you in the morning when the cocks will crow." And she goes into her room. The boy says: "May God bless you and reward you for your kindly talk . . . I'm thinking this night wasn't I a foolish fellow not to kill my father in the days gone by." And down comes the curtain. Now what on earth is there immoral in that?' Well, d'ye know what that publican said? He said: 'That's it! What we want to know is: What happened after the curtain came down?'

"BUT ye know, you lose something by being so quick and clear-cut on the feelms. Ye can't bring out character unless you can stop and hesitate and slur your speech and turn your back to the audience sometimes. And how about poetry? Would feelm audiences stand an hour of that slaw rhythmic speech of Synge's? Ye say that Donat recites Browning in *Knight Without Armour*. I haven't seen it, nor the Shakespeare feelms. Mind ye, I quite like films. I like to drop into a picture but I don't go often and I'm not crazy about acting for 'em. I've done film acting here, but I turned down an offer to go to Hollywood, and I'm quite glad I did. Y'see film acting is all so much in snippets—ye can't get into your stride. It's not acting—it's . . . it's . . . just *rehearsing*.

"And ye can't use gesture so much. It's the same in broadcasting. I played Bottom in the radio *Midsummer Night's Dream*. There we were, Fay Compton, Frank Collier and the rest of us strung out in front of the mike reciting off bits of paper. Mind ye, I like broadcasting. But I want to play Bottom on the stage where ye've got a chance to move about and use your hands and face.

"Timing is the trouble on films. Ye've got to be quick, but ye mustn't be too quick. Comedy, for example. How're ye going to know exactly when to wait for a laugh, and how long? That's where the stage actor has it

*Arthur Sinclair. Right: with Anna Neagle in "Peg of Old Drury"*

over the film star. Even with matinee audiences, which are the deadest of the lot, ye've got something that'll respond, if ye keep on long enough and don't get discouraged. They'll be teaching ye something about the play all the time. I've rehearsed a play for laughs at certain lines, and then the audience goes and laughs at lines I didn't think had laughs in 'em at all. That's the way we learn about a play from night to night. No two audiences laugh at exactly the same points. So we can keep altering and adjusting.

"Now ye can't be judging that on films. The Marx Brothers, for instance. They try to wait on lines they think'll fetch laughs. But they don't, they can't, judge accurately. You either kill one laugh by running it on to another, or bore your audience by slackening the pace when there is no laugh. Especially in farce! Ye see in farce ye mustn't give the audience time to think, because there isn't anything to think about. It's pace, pace, all the time. Ye've got to keep the lines 'up'. Overlapping, ye see what I mean? I saw quite an able musical star, playing in quite a good farce. He started off all right, but then he let the pace get slower and slower, until someone threw a penny on the stage. Now, how'r ye going to know in films how fast or slow to go so that the audience can respond to the play?

"And another thing I don't like about films is this star system. Ye do your best work, and then when ye see the film, ye find your best work has been cut out because they've altered the balance of the play for a star. There's a bit too much of this sort of thing," —and he fluttered his fingers in a manner expressive of the snipping of scissors. "Look what they did to O'Casey—a lovely writer.

"Well, look what happened to *The Plough and the Stars*, a lovely play, better even than *Juno and the Paycock* in my opinion, and it was more popular in New York. O'Casey wrote it for a cast, not a star. Either the whole cast are stars, or there isn't any star. The old rule was not to bring important characters on too early, but O'Casey shows Fluther mending a door right at the rise of the curtain. But the film people took the play, pulled Barbara Stanwyck into the foreground, and pushed the rest of the cast back, and upset the whole balance of the play. Let them write plays for stars if they want to, but need they alter the plays written with a different idea?

"Mind ye," he said, putting on his bowler hat, for he had received the first call for his entrance, "I quite like films. But give me the stage first."

# Speech on the Screen

## Sound has brought from the cinema a spate of words; memorable for arrangement, for sentiment, for beauty;

### *Banjo on my Knee*

*Walter Brennan as Newt Holley.*
*(Screenplay by Nunnally Johnson).*

NEWT: I'm getting to be a pretty old rooster, you know. I'm near onto seventy year old. But there ain't but one more thing in this earth that deep down in my heart I really wish I could have before I go, that I been wishing I had for a long, long time—and that's a—grandbaby—a little fellow to carry on my name. Once I had six chillen of my own. Ernie's the last of 'em; all the rest of them got drownded in the river, the way my pa went and his pa—and the way I'm gonna go when my time comes; but right now I don't care. Outside of this ole boat I ain't got a thing in the world to pass on down to my grandbaby 'cepting the sweetest piece of music I know. That's what I have been saving the *St. Louis Blues* for. That's why I want you to drink a toast to it—because when you drink to it, why you're drinking to my grandbaby.

### *The Life of Emile Zola*

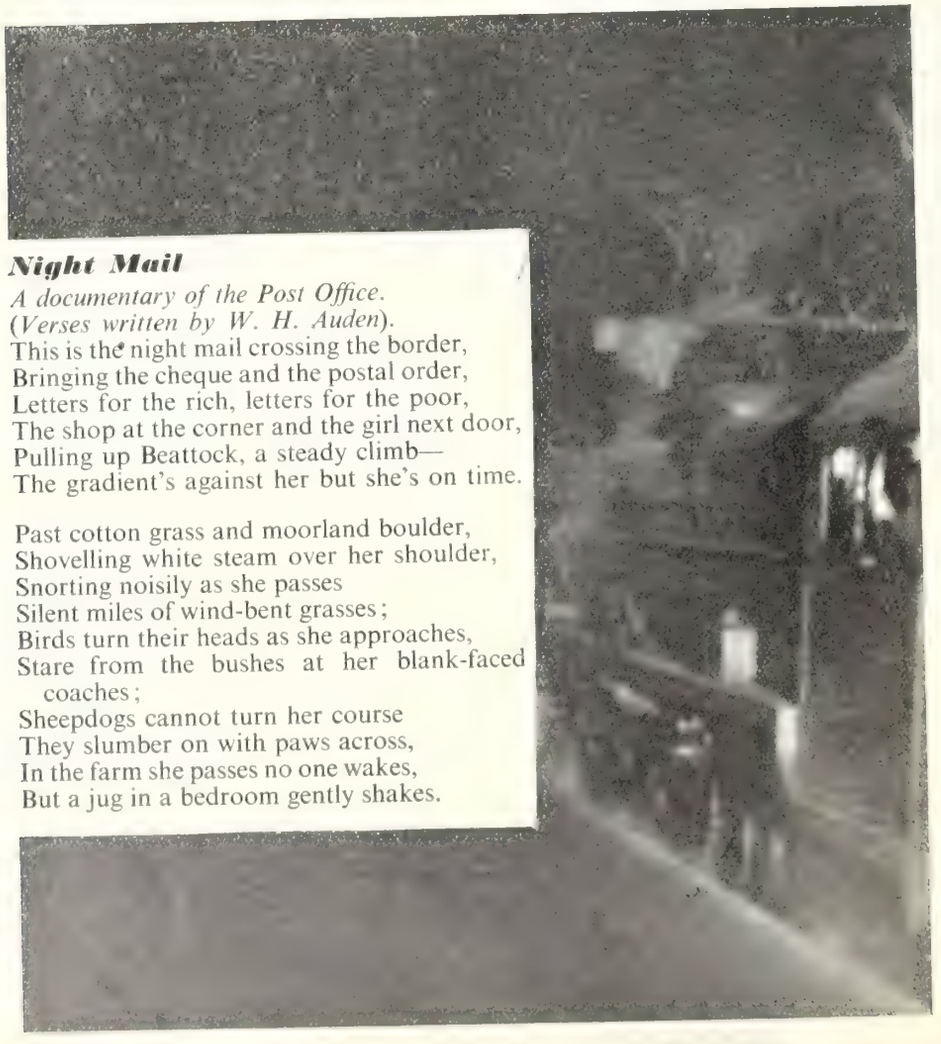
*Morris Carnousky as Anatole France.*
*(Screenplay by Heinz Herald.)*

ANATOLE FRANCE: Let us not mourn him. Let us rather salute that bright spirit of his which will live for ever and like a torch enlighten a younger generation inspired to follow him. You who are enjoying to-day's freedom take to your hearts the words of Zola! Do not forget those who fought the battles for you and bought your liberty with their genius and their blood. Do not forget them and applaud the lies of fanatical intolerance! Be human, for no man in all the breadth of our land more fervently loved humanity than Zola. He had the simplicity of a great soul. He was enjoying the fruits of his labour, fame, wealth, security, when suddenly out of his own free will he tore himself from all the peaceful pleasures of his life, from the work he loved so much, because he knew that there is no serenity save in justice. No repose save in truth . . .

At the sound of his brave words France awakened from her sleep. How admirable is the genius of our country. How beautiful the soul of France which for centuries taught right and justice to Europe and the world! . . .

France is once again to-day a country of reason and benevolence because one of her sons through an immense work and a great action gave rise to a new order of things based on justice and the rights common to all men!

Let us not pity him because he suffered and endured. Let us envy him! Let us envy him because his great heart won him the proudest of destinies. He was a moment of the conscience of man!



### *Night Mail*

*A documentary of the Post Office.*
*(Verses written by W. H. Auden).*

This is the night mail crossing the border,
Bringing the cheque and the postal order,
Letters for the rich, letters for the poor,
The shop at the corner and the girl next door,
Pulling up Beattock, a steady climb—
The gradient's against her but she's on time.

Past cotton grass and moorland boulder,
Shovelling white steam over her shoulder,
Snorting noisily as she passes
Silent miles of wind-bent grasses;
Birds turn their heads as she approaches,
Stare from the bushes at her blank-faced coaches;
Sheepdogs cannot turn her course
They slumber on with paws across,
In the farm she passes no one wakes,
But a jug in a bedroom gently shakes.

# ...eserving of oblivion; but some
# ...rom these we make a verse and prose selection

### *Rembrandt*

*Charles Laughton as Rembrandt van Rijn.*
*(Dialogue by Lajos Biro and Arthur Winteris).*

REMBRANDT: A creature, half-child, half-woman, half-angel, half-lover, brushed against him, and of a sudden he knew that when one woman gives herself to you, you possess all women—women of every age and race and kind—and, more than that, the moon, the stars, all miracles and legends are yours: the brown-skinned girls who inflame your senses with their play; the cool, yellow-haired women who entice and escape you; the gentle ones who serve you; the slender ones who torment you; the mothers who bore and suckled you—all women whom God created out of the teeming fullness of the earth are yours in the love of one woman.

Throw a purple mantle lightly over her shoulders, and she becomes a Queen of Sheba; lay your tousled head blindly upon her breast, and she is a Delilah waiting to enthrall you. Take her garments from her, strip the last veil from her body, and she is a chaste Susanna covering her nakedness with fluttering hands. Gaze upon her as you would gaze upon a thousand strange women, but never call her yours—for her secrets are inexhaustible; you will never know them all. Call her by one name only; *I* call her Saskia.

### *Mr. Deeds goes to Town*

*Gary Cooper as Longfellow Deeds.*
*(Screenplay by Robert Riskin).*

LONGFELLOW DEEDS: About my playing the tuba—seems like a lot of fuss has been made about that. If a man's crazy just 'cause he plays the tuba, somebody better look into it, 'cause there are a lot of tuba players running around loose. Of course, I don't see any harm in it. I play mine whenever I want to concentrate. That may sound funny to some people, but most everybody does something silly when they're thinking. For instance, the Judge here is an O-filler . . . You fill in all the spaces in the O's with your pencil. I was watching you.

That may make you look a little crazy, Your Honour, just sitting around filling in O's, but I don't see anything wrong. 'Cause that helps *you* think. Other people are doodlers. . . That's a name we made up back home for people who make foolish designs on paper while they're thinking. It's called doodling. Most everybody is a doodler. Did you ever see a scratch pad in a telephone booth? People draw the most idiotic pictures when they're thinking. Dr. Fraser, here, could probably think up a long name for it, 'cause he doodles all the time. If Dr. Fraser had to doodle to help him think, that's his business—everybody does something different. Some people are . . . ear-pullers, some are nail-biters. That man there—Mr. Semple—is a nose-twitcher. The lady with him is a knuckle-cracker. So you see, Your Honour, everybody does funny things to help them think. Well, I play the tuba.

### *Coal Face*

*Poetic treatment of Coal Mining.*
*(Verses written by W. H. Auden).*

O lurcher-loving collier black as night
Follow your love across the smokeless hill;
Your lamp is out and all your cages still;
Course for her heart and do not miss,
For Sunday soon is passed and Kate, fly not so fast,
For Monday comes when none may kiss—
Be marble to his soot and to his black be white.

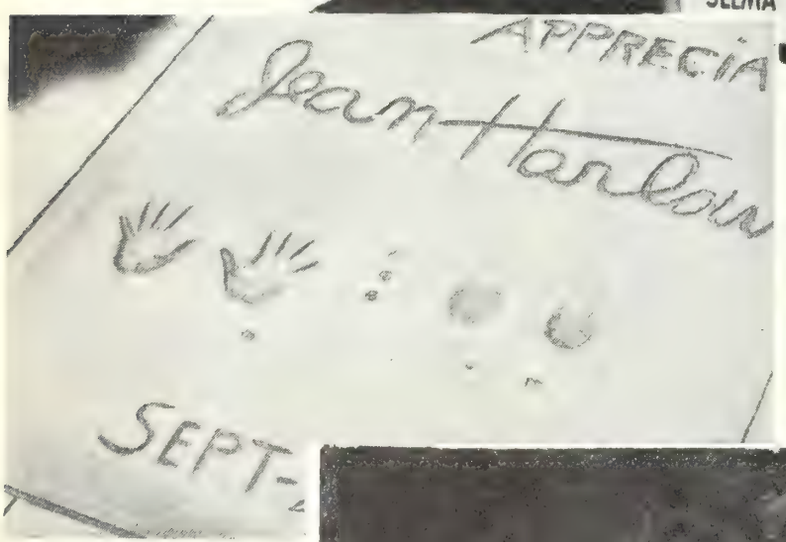
# TWELVE M

## A Survey of Mar

### By Richa

*Above:* Recently elected Mayor of New York City, La Guardia formed the subject of one of March of Time's most successful releases this year.

*Above:* Kemal Ataturk, subject of *Father of All Turks*, compels the entire population of Turkey to learn the Latin alphabet in place of the complicated Arabic script.




*Left:* An Englishman's view of Hollywood—the lobby of the Chinese Theatre with the footprints of Jean Harlow.

*Right:* A picture from *War in China*, March of Time's survey of Chinese progress and Japanese attack.

Now that the time has come to add up the score for March of Time's activities in Britain during the past year, one thing becomes apparent. Novelty is no longer an element in the success of March of Time films. In providing a more penetrating survey of national and world events, it has filled a definite want among film audiences.

The March of Time has not hesitated to renew itself, change its pace, try new methods. A remarkable variety of subject matter has been covered in twelve months by the British unit. Early in the year there was *Black Areas*, a stark reportage of conditions in the coal-mining districts. More frivolous, perhaps, but equally pointed, was the analysis of some of the effects of *D.O.R.A.* on the life of the ordinary citizen. The sequence on Scotland, with particular reference to the *Highlands* problem, was produced by Edgar Anstey and received much comment both in the national and the Scottish press as a serious and direct study of a troubling national problem. In the lighter vein was the sequence on a Britisher's reactions to *Hollywood*, which in a degree formed the sequel to an earlier M.O.T. story on Britain's own Hollywood, at that time going full blast.

Latest from the British production unit is the March of Time story on *Oxford*, bringing in the University Appeal, and, of course, the spectacular benefactions of Lord Nuffield, who appears in the film with Lord Halifax, the Chancellor. Notable "firsts" in this subject include the first filming of the Encænia ceremony, first re-enactments made at the University with complete co-operation from the authorities, first appearance of Lord Nuffield in a directed film. The finished film has received the approval of the University, with no cuts necessary, and M.O.T. is proud that it has found news value in a British institution which other producers have long ignored.

From overseas, March of Time has brought

# NTHS of TIME

## of Time's Third Year

## e Rochemont

to its British public the first analysis of *John L. Lewis*, and his cataclysmic C.I.O.; studies of Kemal Ataturk, *Father of all Turks*, and the economic side of that thrifty, self-reliant and close-knit religious organisation, *The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints;* two graphic and illuminating subjects on the place of *Poland* in the picture of the coming war, and what *China* faces in the present one; and finally a detailed, intimate record of *Fiorello La Guardia*, reforming Mayor of New York, recently re-elected in a landslide vote.

It is a matter of record that more and better theatres are playing March of Time than before, and that serious critics speak of it and write of it as setting a standard for news films and for shorts in general. To-day it is working out, on a practical basis, the interchange of techniques and ideas with the American March of Time. Recently it sent Edgar Anstey to New York to make the liaison even closer, and brought from New York, James H. S. Moynahan, as a collaborator on scripts.

During the year, March of Time was forced to suspend distribution in Spain and in China, on account of war conditions. But in the same period its French edition, called "La Marche du Temps," got under way and is making remarkable progress in France, Belgium and Switzerland. Gilbert Comte, who worked with M.O.T. on production, became editor of the French reel. The famous French character actor Destac became the "Voice of Time", or, perhaps, "La Voix du Temps". Marcel Paulis, well-known as a documentary producer on the Continent, joined up as film editor under Comte.

Two travelling production units, one under Maurice Lancaster of London, the other under Jean Pages of the Paris office, covered Scandinavia and North Africa respectively. A new unit, headed by S. R. Sozio, former editor of French Paramount News, has been set up and will be in production before the New Year.

*Above:* Famous for its grouse shooting, the Highlands of Scotland were another subject for March of Time, which shows the dire poverty of its inhabitants.

*Above:* Descendants of the ancient clans have clung for generations to unfriendly soil. They are faced with extremities unless help is forthcoming.

*Above:* Nottinghamshire miners at war with the Spencer Union; an incident in *Black Areas.*

*Left:* Unemployment in the Welsh coalfields.

# An Innocent in Harlem

## by Thomas Baird

WASHINGTON is a white man's city. It is very modern with its planned streets and government buildings. The White House, sitting like a forgotten wedding cake, dazzles in the sunlight. The capitol is like an architect's model. Everything is clean, neat and underlined like a schoolboy's prize copy-book. It is Babbitt's dream of organisation and historicity. It is quite astonishing to find pictures of the story of the Red Indian in the galleries and living negroes walking in the streets. It is more amazing to find so many negroes in the streets. They do not seem to enjoy the responsibilities which their brothers have in New York or Chicago. The clerks of Washington are white, many of the porters are white and the negroes are found mainly in the hot dog stands, behind the café bars, in the saloons, and in the gutter trades.

The negroes of Washington are subdued. In St. Louis they strut majestically through the streets and in New York many have white collars and the air of efficient workers, or the sailor's roll of the actor off stage. In Washington they efface themselves and slink against the wall leaving the white man his fifteen sixteenths of the sidewalk.

It was the night of the Louis-Braddock fight. I was walking along Pennsylvania Avenue about nine p.m. The short dusk was passing rapidly into night. It was quiet in the parkway. I came on a taxi standing by the sidewalk with a small group gathered round its open door. From inside came the radio voice of an announcer. "Louis follows with a quick left. It's close fighting now. A short jab has sent Braddock back. He's in again. Louis took a packet there. He's hitting back." A negro on the fringe of the crowd was grining broadly.

A hundred yards farther on a loud-speaker echoed through the emptiness of a garage. Several people were standing round the entrance listening. Two negro garage hands were sitting on the running-board of the car. They were listening intently, but their eyes kept flashing a smile to the group at the doorway. "Louis is handing out punishment. The white man is wavering. He has more than he can handle in Louis. Louis is superb. He flashes his left like a panther." A negro smiles behind his hand. Another shouts "Give him hell, Joe."

I stop at a coffee stall. The hand of the negro who serves me shakes. The coffee slops over into the saucer. He doesn't care. He is back with his head down by the loud speaker. He is anxious, for Louis has taken a whack or two. "Louis is coming back again. He is on the look-out. He watches every move. He

landed one there—a chest blow. He is following up. Another and another and another. Braddock is against the ropes." The negro is smiling. There is a glint in his eye. He has tipped his white cap jauntily.

Beyond the light of the stall a few negroes are standing along the kerb. They lean forward to catch every word. It is near the end now. It won't be long. The knock-out. "Louis wins—a magnificent fight—Braddock has put up a great show, but Joe Louis is still champion—a master fighter—superior." The white cap of the coffee stall attendant is in the air—"Superior." The negroes are dancing on the sidewalk—"Champion." Two dark girls are laughing—"Master." The only white man who says anything starts out to say something about brains and brawn, but stops and drinks his coffee when he realises that he has got the catch phrase wrong—or has he?

HARLEM is in the North of Manhattan Island. It is a fairly clearly marked district spread around Seventh Avenue from the 120's into the 130's. Most of the houses are old, the grand old houses of another day. Most of them are split up now into flats and are lived in by negro families. There are a few white people here, but in the main the whites are falling back as Harlem grows. There are a few buildings in which there are both white and black families. On the edges of Harlem are some coffee-coloured children.

* * *

The Apollo is at 125th Street. It is a music hall-cum-picture palace. It is Wednesday night in mid-July. The sun has been blazing all day and the street is full of motionless hot air. The pavement is hot through my shoes. Two signs flash on the far side of the Apollo—LOUIS BRADDOCK FIGHT NEWSREEL and AMATEUR NIGHT. As white visitors we are encouraged to take a box. We pass down a dark passage and mount to our coign of vantage perched by the side of the stage. One can see the house and the stage. The feature picture is just ending and the audience is silent. They are not very interested, they are here for one purpose, to see the prince of all negroes, the man who has brought more prestige than any other, Joe Louis.

In the half-light I see a battery of black faces up-turned to the screen, passive and expectant. Cigarette tips gleam in the dark and smoke curls up into the beam from the projector. The heat is terrific, and I shed my coat and collar and tie. The expectancy grows as the feature finishes. Suddenly the newsreel flashes on to the screen, the music blares out and there is a wild shout from the audience. The commentator's words are drowned. Then the shouting dies down and we can hear his introductory remarks. Then Louis appears on the screen—modest and magnificent. There is a roar of welcome; Harlem welcomes its king. The fight starts. Every blow that Louis takes is suffered by the audience; every punch that Louis delivers is acclaimed to high heaven. Then the knock-out. The audience is ecstatic. But there is something to come for which no shout is sufficient salute. The knock-out blow is shown a second time in slow motion. The poetry of perfect action is received in silent adoration.

AMATEUR night at the Apollo is in the old tradition of nothing barred. Louis's fight with Braddock was a picnic compared with the ordeal which the amateur turns must face. From my seat on the side I can see into the wings. There is a group of negroes shifting about restively. The women smooth their silks and the men pat their hair and straighten their ties. One man is biting his nails. The audience is ready. Most of them are in their shirt sleeves. There is a hubbub of chatter. The artists are ready and the master of ceremonies walks on the stage. He announces there are sixteen aspirants to fame. They will sing and dance for us and the quantity and character (with a wink) of the applause will be taken as an indication of their popularity.

The first turn is Mr. Pennsylvania Washington. He is a tenor. He walks to the centre of the stage and clutches the microphone in both hands. The orchestra starts and his thin negro falsetto shrills out "This Year's Crop of Kisses". He holds his own for two lines. Sweat is running down his face. He tightens his grip on the microphone. He knows it's coming and it does. A solitary catcall echoes from the pit, a jeer from the gallery and a howl from the whole house. He laughs just once and slinks off the stage. A couple of coloured ladies follow. They do a sister act—close harmony. They make a chorus and a verse. Then the harmony becomes not so close. Then a discord and a howl from the audience. They tilt their heads back with confidence. They can take it. The next verse will be O.K. They want another chance. But the audience doesn't want another verse.

The next is a baritone. He lasts to the end and walks off in triumph. This is a good break for the next turn, a buxom dusky belle. I know she will be a contralto and I know she will sing "Deep River". But I am wrong. She stands by the microphone and gives a dignified signal to the orchestra to commence. She then squeaks out a high soprano version of "Let's Go Slumming". But not for long. Three bars and the hooting starts. The audience is roaring; laughter, squeals, whistles, catcalls. But she sings on. I can't hear a word. It seems nothing will stop her. The M.C. tries to lead her gently by the arm. Not her. She is going to sing or die in the attempt. It looks like a death to me. The house is in an uproar. Then the last straw. A large negro, over six feet tall, dressed in magnificent robes and a turban, enters from the wings. From the folds of his robes he draws a revolver. He takes careful aim at our soprano and fires a series of loud, blank shots. The explosions drown everything and our soprano walks off in high dudgeon.

At the corner of the avenue there is a shoeshine boy. He sits in the sun and you would think he was asleep. His back is against the wall and his head lies on his shoulder. His face is in repose. But his eyes are open. He is gazing. I look but there is nothing there, just a sidewalk sizzling in the heat. He keeps on gazing. He does not press me to have my shoes shined. He says nothing. He just gazes. But he does not shift his gaze. I wish I could see what he sees.

# MY AIM IN PICTURES

*We asked Darryl Zanuck to tell us what he was trying to do for the cinema. Here is his reply.*

MY aim in the motion picture world is to strive to create the finest possible entertainment for the greatest number of persons throughout the world.

In many ways the production of films corresponds to other industries, but the similarity has to do mostly with the organisation and preparation of material. The finished product in Hollywood superimposes upon an industrial background the artistic temperament and interpretations of thousands of creative men and women.

Timeliness is the greatest single factor a film producer must consider. Newspaper headlines which reflect the public's pulse throughout the world are the barometers by which every alert screen executive takes his reckonings and sets his course.

Behind the smashing headlines of the first pages are the personalities and ideas which grip the imaginations of the millions. By weaving stories around those events which

make news, the screen producer creates pictures that the millions will want to see.

The general public is interested primarily in events that touch their lives, with which they are familiar. Films that artistically interpret them are ones that prove the most successful.

While dramatic stories are being written, each producer must continually build personalities that have ability, colour and freshness to properly and fully interpret these stories. New faces must be brought continually to the screen along with new ideas.

The public, whether in Burma, London, New York or Sydney, is interested in achievement. The dramatic history of a great institution, such as Lloyd's furnishes natural cinema material as we used in *Lloyd's of London*. We are following that same psychology in filming the powerful history of the great fire that destroyed a great American city in 1871—*In Old Chicago*. The destruction of a big city and the human courage and faith that rebuilt it are natural cinema subjects.

In improving motion pictures, the film producer must keep up with the ever-changing tastes and desires of the public throughout the world and continue to mount each picture as artistically as the subject warrants.

# Captains Courageous

THIS I am told, is the film of the month among the general releases, and I believe it, though I can never find my way in the idiotic labyrinth of premières, first runs, second runs and the kind I see at the Crystal in the Borough. These, of course, are the best ones, for by the time a film gets to the Crystal the spit and polish have gone, the confidence trick of presentation and ballyhoo is an old damp squib of months ago, and *Lost Horizon*, *Deeds* and the Hoot Gibsons, they all come even at last on the bill boards. They have to talk across the hard floors and the waste spaces of the peanuts to be good, with nothing to warm them except what is inside themselves and that is as it should be. The Crystal is the place to pick the classics alright and only the elemental survives under its last ironic timeless eye.

But *Captains Courageous*, I know, will pass down the line in triumph and, except for its miserable and indeed bloody last reel, it will be for the boys of the old Dover Road what the cinema was thirty years ago to all of us in the then abandoned skating rinks. I cannot be a critic at all about the film. It has everything I asked for thirty years ago—the sea and the fishing schooners and fog on the Grand Banks and fishing cod from a dory with hand lines one after the other—and then a race between the schooners in a high wind, with noses ploughing under and throwing water high over the fo'c'sle, and the hull heeling over till it seems impossible it will ever come back, and the mast straining under the bravery of brave men, till it cracks.

*"Captains Courageous": a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film, based on the story by Rudyard Kipling. Produced by Louis D. Lighton, directed by Victor Fleming and photographed by Harold Rosson, with Freddie Bartholomew, Spencer Tracy, Lionel Barrymore, Melvyn Douglas and Mickey Rooney.*

# Best Release of the Month

I confess I have been fortunate since. I have gone to sea as I vowed and fished cod one after the other with hand lines one after the other, and there isn't a whip of wind or water, or a hull heeling over so it didn't seem it would come back, that I couldn't match; and the reality was as good as the dream, as all realities are when you look into them. The only difference perhaps, that it wasn't mostly on the Grand Banks and the only fish I ever loaded into a Grand Banks schooner was some raw bootleg liquor in the days of Prohibition. But here, with *Captains Courageous*, I fall for it as hard as ever and all over again, and will quite certainly join a schooner at Gloucester, Mass., as soon as I can get there, and in spite of the Swiss advertisements and the Travel and Industrial Development Association of Great Britain and Ireland, saving their presence.

Maybe when I get to Gloucester, Mass., I shall not hold so strongly for racing till the foremast goes; and there is a point of navigational ethics in crossing a bank in a high sea, just to beat the other fellow, which I shall discuss at length, if not soberly, with the skipper. I have no doubt either, that we shall get by without losing the brave and noble Spencer Tracy when the mast goes and indulging in a long heart-to-heart talk with him before he finally disappears below the waves. I feel certain that at the end of our trip, when we unload our cod and sell them smart, that we shall not have a grand slam burial service for the hundreds of drowned sailor-men we have left behind us, with weeping women and other nonsense stacked to the skyline, and a daft statue of an emaciated man-at-the-wheel towering over us, his eyes staring nowhere a good mariner's should. But all that is best in the film I shall have and easily; and that is how the sea is the one thing that never disappoints a man and how good a sea film *Captains Courageous* is. A bit of exaggeration perhaps at the high spots, but basically all that a fishing film should be—with everybody in their right places round the table in the saloon, and the mixture of dirt, and discipline and ribaldry just right, and none of that sissy swagger that is coming these days into every ship afloat, what with education and the cruises and the pyjama parties on the Atlantic, so there is no sea tradition left, except in the stokeholds.

I SHOULD say that for this breath-taking reality of the sea—or, shall we say, the breath-taking reality of the romance of the sea made real—the film is better than Kipling, except that Kipling couldn't conceivably have made such an over-nauseating mess of that last reel. The Americans have handled the essential story well. The little prig of a boy who is due for salvation at the hands of fishermen, is a very son of a dog of a boy as played by Freddie Bartholomew, and his saving at the hands and heart of a Portuguese fisherman named Spencer Tracy is as nice and delicate a job of work as Spencer Tracy ever did. He even sold me a rather sappy address to the night sky and the angels and sang something about "Don't cry little fish" in a harsh and horrible voice which, I confess, is my idea of singing on the Grand Banks off Newfoundland. Only the long and dithering death of the man withdrew my loyalties. I can only explain it by saying that I don't mind old Captain Ahab dying as a hero should, when, as any fool can see, it is the time for Destiny and the Great White Whale to come for him. But watery graves, which happen by accident like and only to be sad about them, are not good fishing, nor good film, but only bad Louis B. Mayer and melodramatic slobbering of the worst. When I get to Gloucester, Mass., Louis B. Mayer will quite positively not be present. He would drown anybody, including me, for his box-office.

Victor Fleming directed and I would like to hear his explanation of how so good a film—though, you will have gathered, simple-minded—managed to foul its lines so stupidly coming into harbour. For the death of our hero is but the signal for a general collapse in which Lionel Barrymore's seamanship, good film direction and the tight little story of the making of a man, suddenly go off the earth together with Spencer Tracy. It is notorious that Americans, not content with the lugubrious sentimentality of Mothers' Day, have also created a Fathers' Day, and that is the trouble. What a people, what a people. The boy's father is brought in and there are dreadful goings on about fathers getting close to their sons, laying alongside their little hearts, close hauling their whatnots, and being pals to them, and other horrifying sickness of the sort, with the little hand finally closed in the fat sloppy hand of American paternity. Here, I regret to say, I leave the ship. Who does not know that fathers, like skippers, exist to slam hell out of their sons—and sons, fathers?

*John Grierson*

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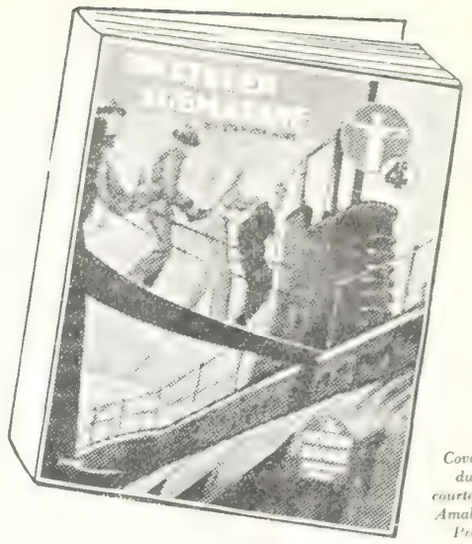
# Heroes are Hard to Find nowadays



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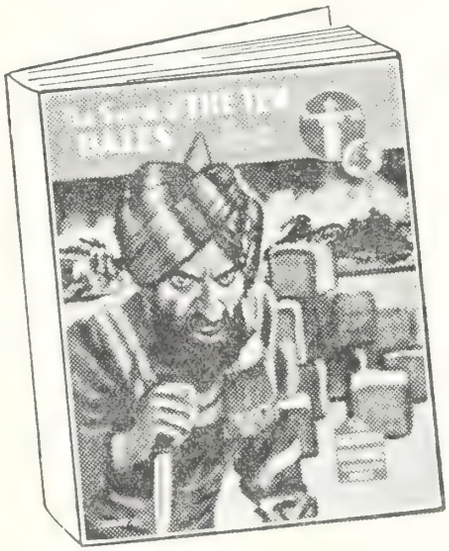
GEORGE KING is making a film called *Sexton Blake and the Master Criminal.* Tod Slaughter will probably do for the Master Criminal, but Sexton Blake is another matter.

For forty years this young detective has been practising in his rooms at Baker Street. In the course of that time he has solved a major mystery every week, and two extra long mysteries (4*d.* each) every month. He has never loved (except a dumb affection just before the war which only lasted a few issues), partly because heroes never do, but principally because he has never had time, for as soon as things got a bit quiet at Baker Street, George Marsden Plummer broke out of his strong lodgings at Dartmoor and had to be chased all over the roofs of Rotherhithe and all through the cellars of Soho.

All this while the police have been so completely baffled that many a time there has not been a compositor in the country who could lay his hands on an f. Sir Henry Fairfax, chief of the Yard, has sent for Blake times out of number, for jewel thieves, drug pedlars and international crooks. Some of the criminals he has caught have been the despair of seven continents.

Sherlock Holmes was tough enough to come back after Conan Doyle had flung him over a precipice on the Matterhorn, but even Holmes met his fate. Sexton Blake has been flung over more precipices than Conan Doyle ever heard of, he has been shot, strangled, thrown down the lift, drugged, gagged and bound and yet next Thursday always found him at his post. Beside Blake, Harry Houdini earned his money pretty easily. In the end, poor Houdini succumbed to a playful blow in the stomach in a New York dressing-room. He was mortal. But Blake never succumbed to anything, and he never will.

Though he was but mortal, Houdini did very well in his day as the idol of the front seats. A few years before him, Francis Ford as Count Rollo jumped and rolled about the screen, mostly with his hands tied behind his back. In due course, Douglas Fairbanks scampered from roof to roof and Tarzan swung from branch to branch. It was the boyhood of the movies, the cinema was in its early teens. All the seats were front seats. What with Douglas Fairbanks up in the rigging (for there was no keeping him on the deck) and various pretty ladies hanging by the teeth from one week's end to another, Hollywood must have been like Bertram Mills's circus in full blast.



Douglas Fairbanks got past it, no shame to him, but unhappily Hollywood got past it too. Buck Jones, Tom Mix, Rin-tin-tin, Charlie Chan, Jack Holt and so on carried on for the sake of the children, but the rest of us were expected to put away childish things. Hollywood fell in love. It was the worst kind of love, too, the serious, introspective, twenty-year-old kind. The talkies happened about this time, more's the pity. By and by Norma Shearer was tackling all the problems of matrimony and behaviour in *The Divorcee* and *A Free Soul*, and winning medals and statuettes for it. No doubt she found the solutions, but this is something known only to those who waited till the end of the film.

THOSE salad days are passing, but the movies are still in love. It is their great preoccupation, and still pretty serious, even when it is comic. Most of the so-called development of the movies has been in the direction of discovering new ways of being in love and new kinds of people to be in love with. The malady has penetrated the very grandest efforts. *Mr. Deeds* was not permitted to solve America's social problem without solving Jean Arthur's, and Ronald Colman had to give up the whole of Western Civilisation in favour of a young lady in pyjamas. In the last ten years, the only people who have been allowed to get through a full-length film without having a six-cylinder romance are Louis Pasteur and Emile Zola, both of whom in any case are disqualified by age.

Consequently, heroes are about as hard to find nowadays as vamps or villains. In the happy days before the movies began to take themselves seriously, a hero had to be able to climb a skyscraper and swim a mile under water, and was frequently called upon (wounded, if possible) to fight three men, with a sword in each hand and a dagger in his mouth, simultaneously running backwards upstairs, signalling for help, and letting down various drawbridges. The beauty of it was that everybody knew it was a lark.

Nowadays the main qualification for the leading part appears to be a disposition to fall in love with someone not your wife. By being in love with Nora, Nick Charles shook Hollywood to the foundations and caused reverberations all over the world.

People want to take all the films for gospel. Already the higher critics are saying about *A Prisoner of Zenda* what the clergyman said about "Gulliver's Travels". (He said, it is all very nice, but for my part I do not believe a word of it.) *The Plainsman* was bad enough, but at least Gary Cooper got killed at the end. *A Prisoner of Zenda* indeed. Mercy me, at this time of day.

So pack up your Sexton Blake, Mr. George King. You are fifteen years too late. We have all grown up, and we are not to be fooled with that kind of thing. We are not coming out. We won't holler down your rain-barrel, we won't climb your stable door.

We believe that Mr. Frank Capra has a message for the world, we believe that somehow or other Mr. Deeds and Ronald Colman between them will save society, we believe in love in all its permutations and combinations. Let us have Sexton Blake up to date if you like—*The Private Life of Sexton Blake*, *The Loves of Sexton Blake*, *The Soul of Sexton Blake*, yes. But *The Adventures of Sexton Blake*, no.

**Russell Ferguson**

# *Five Films*

## *by John Grierson*

KEN Nyman has held up a bar at some length telling what he did with the Coronation film at Brighton. Good showman that he is, he sensed that there was something in coronation appeal that was bringing people he had never seen before, and in fact the lost battalions of aborigines who, according to the statisticians, never go to the movies. He started a special show for them on Brighton mornings at 10.30 and as many of the twenty millions as live in Brighton came day after day, some of them fifteen or twenty times, to see it. He kept it going for months. Less brightly, Nyman concluded that he might hold them permanently, so he continued with a special programme of documentaries, sprinkled with nature films and as much snobbism as he could find in the newsreels and the interests. He folded in a fortnight. The twenty millions had seen their King and their Queen and their Archbishop and had slipped back for another reign into the boarding-house parlours and the private hotels.

One wonders if *The Prisoner of Zenda* may not be the very film to fetch them out again. It has everything that a nice but nearly departed aunt could wish for and she would be taking up her embroidery precisely where she left off. Ronald Colman is the Englishman of legend, at least of the legend of old ladies; brave, noble, dashing and suggesting alas alack-a-day that every trueborn Englishman is a king at heart and only awaits a Graustark world and double identity to prove it. No trouble here, to drag royalty by the headlines, of kings and commons mixing; but sacrifice adamant of love to duty. Ronald Colman, like a good Englishman, shows the way by riding into the eye of the setting sun and leaving Madeleine Carroll to his drunken double. Madeleine shows the way too. "Though my life be empty and my heart dead, I must do this thing" and "Honour binds a woman too". Madeleine: "In my heart there is no king and no crown". Ronald: "Does a man who marries without love look on a woman as I look on you?" Madeleine: "I am sorry . . . I have never been in love before". That is the style of the thing and the exquisite self-righteousness of Mr. Colman and the exquisite frigidity of Miss Carroll combine to make it look as sterile as it sounds.

Indeed, if Ken Nyman and his old ladies will not take to the film, one wonders who in their senses will. Here is an idea which may bring that very feat to pass. Let Ken Nyman prevail on Miss Lejeune to go out, as of old, into the highways and the byways, and compel the old ladies to come in. She writes so beautifully about Zenda that none could withstand her. She will entrap them in nostalgia for the "puffed sleeves, and braided skirts and the Norfolk shooting jackets." She will inspire them with "homesickness for the quiet days when it was better to be good than clever", which doubtless the old ladies were anyway, and "heart's messages were wrapped round a rose and gentlemen had time even in their moments of passion to remember their subjunctives." It will be worth a guinea a box to any old lady in the land.

It is true that others who have never learned to like Graustark will react differently. They will light up at the fighting and the sword play and the rhetoric about kings and princes and all the ham that goes with it; but, as Old Believers, will regret the day when women were brought in to take the spotlight in adventure and adulterate it to mere romance. They may quote Strindberg and say "To hell with all the witches" and remember the tradition when women were kept in their places, stood waiting appropriately on the battlements and, with girdles of virtue locked good and solid to their waists, did not need to be bothered about. Prince, Bayard would have smashed his sword . . . This Anthony Hope tradition—so much do middle class and Odeon and old ladies conquer us all—is nine parts sofa play, and long sofa play at that, and only a miserable squabble of a fight to make up the measure. J. G.

**The Prisoner of Zenda**

A United Artists' film, directed by John Cromwell, with Ronald Colman, Madeleine Carroll, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., and Mary Astor.

**They Won't Forget**

A Warner Brothers' film, directed by Mervyn LeRoy, with Claude Rains, Edward Norris, Allyn Joslyn, Gloria Dickson and Otto Kruger.

"A CRY of pity, an appeal for justice, I ask no more," said Zola, who is pretty much in the news just now, and whose spirit seems still to be hovering over the Burbank Studios. Warner Brothers, in fact, are still at it, and in *They won't Forget* they've turned out something on which about 14 states in the U.S.A. are almost bound to close their doors. For it is a savage, terrible, horrifying, cynical and unequivocable exposé of the backwardness and degeneration of the smalltime towns of the Southern States, which have, with their lynchings and their Scottsboro' trials, made American justice stink to heaven.

This film indeed doesn't bother to ask for a cry of pity or to make an appeal to justice. Mervyn LeRoy, who produced, has just piled up a documentation of events which take you through the good old Aristotelian Pity and Terror into a world where a cold fury supersedes a bout of vomiting. Anyhow, perhaps that's what Aristotle really meant when he talked about being Purged.

Tragedy in the accepted sense it may not be, but, as a piece of sheer film-making alone, it is one of the most terrific pieces that has ever come out of America; it makes *Fury* look like a Follies Show.

The story is hideously simple. In a small Southern town, on Memorial Day, a girl is murdered. How, or by whom, we are never told. But the scheming District Attorney wants a big public success to get into the running for the Governorship. Of the suspects, all but one are either too important, or too small fry. The one remaining is just perfect. He's a Northerner, and a college teacher. Aided by the venomous unscrupulosity of the Yellow press the Attorney fans the flames of racial hatred; and the unfortunate man, virtually condemned before the trial opens, on evidence which is only circumstantial, is sentenced to the Chair. A more liberal-minded Governor commutes the sentence to life imprisonment; so the high souled citizens step in, snatch him from the train which is taking him to prison, and lynch him. Thus the District Attorney achieves his life ambition.

Had it been presented with the more hysterical lavishness of the average American "super," the film might have failed to hit the mark. But its strength is in its omissions. We don't see the murder. We don't see the lynching (we see instead the mail train wrenching a mailbag off the pick-up bar). And by this very restraint the film becomes much more horrible than anything since *Greed*. It has, in fact, something of the crawling terror which Henry James achieved in *The Turn of the Screw*.

The attack is more than through the intellect, it reaches physical proportions. You squirm in your seat as the vicious panorama of ignorance and depravity unfolds. The narrow, nasty conversation of the townsfolk. The weak-minded degeneration of the girl's fiancé. The chinless sadism of the crime reporter. The shifty and unscrupulous District Attorney, with his ratlike eyes, his treacherous mouth mangling a cigar the way he mangles humans, as he covers his tracks with the bluff heartiness we all know only too well in the person of the average politician. . . .

The brooding atmosphere that infects the sidewalks, the offices, and the tidy little home which the accused man and his wife have with several years of labour got together, is the brooding atmosphere of real terror, the terror of realising that these are not human

# REVIEWED

## by Basil Wright

**Stella Dallas**

A United Artists' film, directed by King Vidor, with Barbara Stanwyck, John Boles and Anne Shirley.

**Land Without Bread**

A Spanish film, directed by Louis Bunuel.

**Spanish Earth**

A Spanish film, produced by Ernest Hemingway and directed by Joris Ivens.

beings, but animals with man's capabilities, who are crowding the stuffy courtroom; judge, spectators, and jury alike unanimous in the verdict before the trial begins.

No, this is not a pleasant film; there is nothing pleasant about it; but by heck it's real. It's as real as the newsreel stuff from Shanghai, and because it belongs to a world nearer our own, it's a thousand times more horrible.

The largest bouquet goes to director Mervyn LeRoy. Technically alone, it's the finest production of the year. Claude Rains, as the District Attorney, qualifies for one almost as large. Of the rest of a large cast, all of them first-class, it is almost invidious to single out Gloria Dickson, as the victim's wife, and Elisha Cook Jr., for a really macabre performance as the girl's fiancé. Don't be put off by the opening sequence, which is as falsely sentimental as it is dramatically incorrect; you'll forget it quickly enough, and, believe me, it's the only thing in the film you *will* forget.

STILL in the tragic mood, we turn to *Stella Dallas*, that epic of frustrated mother-love over which we all cried our eyes out in the silent twenties. Those indeed were the days, when a happy ending was almost unheard of, and the orchestra had permanent repeat-bar on "Liebestraüme." The original *Stella Dallas* was, in point of fact, a first-class film, quite apart from its mush aspects. Henry King, who directed it, had a passionate and yet delicate sincerity which made much of the production movingly genuine as well as genuinely moving. And as for the cast, there was Belle Bennett as Stella, magnificently vulgar and magnificently human; there was Lois Moran—*ombre des jeunes filles en fleur*; and there was Jean Hersholt at the height of his powers. The film had a touch of greatness.

So Sam Goldwyn has tried it out again, this time with King Vidor directing. The result is as much like the original as a warmed-up pudding. The mush remains; the inspiration has vanished. This time the sentimentality is presented with no more than a cold and calculating competence.

The truth is that sound has brought an effeminacy to films which cannot stand up to this sort of melodrama. There used to be a pure unselfconscious swashbucklery which fitted just nicely, but was destroyed when the actors no longer had to rely on mime to express themselves. Nowadays, a broken voice can reveal a broken heart; and Miss Stanwyck is good at that. But think back on Belle Bennett in the same situation. *She* had to do it with her face and hands.

Barbara Stanwyck in any case has not yet achieved the necessary dramatic control; over and over again you can see Vidor fading her out just where the personal climax should be starting. But Anne Shirley quite miraculously repeats the triumph of Lois Moran. Tender, delicate, over-sensitive, and above all, loving, she lifts each sequence she appears in out of the mediocre into something very near real drama.

THE depression deepens as we approach *Land without Bread*. An extraordinary film. Directed by the screen's quondam prophet of surrealism, Louis Bunuel, it achieves in visual simplicity, not the imaginative creativeness which is supposed to be the hallmark of documentary, but a stark presentation of actuality which certainly deserves the title of document.

This complete volte-face made by Bunuel, who hitherto had specialised in shots of dead donkeys ensconced in a grand piano, led him to a little known and remote district of Spain, inhabited by people known as the Hurdanos. In stony and infertile uplands they are born to a lifelong despair, martyrs to malnutrition, to goitre, to tuberculosis. Generations of inbreeding have produced a high percentage of cretins. Generations without hope have lost even the art of decent house-building. Children lie down in the street in a coma, cannot be moved, die. Their only hope is death.

Such are the facts that Bunuel's camera quite unemotionally presents. They are presented without sympathy and without rage. He was there with a camera; he saw these things; he photographed them. That is all.

Unfortunately someone (presumably not Bunuel) has added to the film a wearisome American commentary plus the better part of a Brahms symphony. As a result, picture and sound never coalesce, and it is only the starkness of the presented facts which counts.

SINCERE, truthful, moving, *The Spanish Earth*. So you can guess that our old friend the censor had to have a go at it with his emasculating scissors; cutting out "horror" shots and removing tactless references to German and Italian intervention. But with a film like this the impotence he would inflict returns upon himself. Snip he never so furiously, he cannot destroy its strength.

It was made by Joris Ivens and Ernest Hemingway; and those who complain that Hemingway's work is falling off had better prepare to eat their hats, for he has written the best commentary in the history of the sound film. As the pathetic little groups of six men go out across the quiet fields to the attack (a scene photographed with all the restraint which, not merely through the physical compulsion of flying bullets but also through Ivens's sense of film-making, gives this film a quality of greatness) as they go out across the fields they used to till, Hemingway's voice—for he speaks the commentary himself—cuts through the sounds of crackling battle, "This is the moment which all the rest of the war prepares for, when six men go forward into death, to walk across a stretch of land, and by their presence on it prove this land is ours."

It is not merely fact that this film presents, but emotions and moods which build up for the first time a true picture of what war is really like. But it presents more than this—it presents the face of Spain and the faces of its people, proud and remote until bombs drop or shells shatter, then in panic and tears; women who trip and fall in their run for the safety of the Metro station, women who gasp and weep in that horrible vacuum which follows the destruction of the home they have lived in so happily until two minutes ago; ordinary men who have become soldiers almost imperceptibly, who will fire a field-gun every so often at the ruins of their great University which, thanks to the treachery of fellow countrymen and the mercenary troops of Italy and Germany, they must bring even further to destruction; and, worst of all, the faces of children who cannot understand, but are afraid.

Villages, cities, churches, fields—they are all here—a picture of Spain itself. There is no sensational cutting and no coruscating camera-work; but there is the observation of men who can imaginatively observe, can feel and express the implications of what they see. "Man cannot act before the camera in the presence of death," says Hemingway, as a frieze of magnificent faces of Government troops swing past the camera; but here is something more than acting.

We can only hope that the well-meaning Left and Liberal press has not, by screaming to the roof-tops that the censor has mutilated the film, put people off going to see *The Spanish Earth*. Ignoble cuts count for nothing when you are watching a great film. B.W.

# All the World

## Otis Ferguson's descriptive review of a Big

turning of coats to be on the winning side, all

ambition and body being broken under spotlig

In the picture you can see the biding restraint and driving power of arms and shoulders, the bodies weaving, surging, braced. You can see in perfect focus the deadly precision of Joe Louis, weighing 198 pounds and moving like 140, also his one-two-three routine—a left to the body followed through, by some powerful flex of shoulder, into a left hook to the head, and the right coming in through the opening, bam. You can see in slow motion every step and blow following the first blow to stagger this fighting turret, the long-range salvo against the bones forward of his left ear which sent the Brown Bomber scuttling off backwards in queer little half-circles on his heels; and Schmeling moving up on him in a fury of attack and Louis melting under those blows like butter, seeking cover where there was none, blown wide open with a left and seeming in the slow motion to hang there for seconds as the right came in like a train of cars, bouncing him on the canvas.

In the camera record you can see the several low blows struck by Louis subsequently, and along with the worst of them the somehow touching picture of his remorse and mute reassurance to Max (one doesn't talk through a clenched mouthpiece) by throwing arms over his shoulders with futile pats of the glove. And you can see the kill as clear as crystal—Louis coming out wavering but still to be reckoned with as usual, his being driven back around the ring, knocked silly with the final direct hit, toddling like a baby under the pelting gloves, and then the last completely safe powerhouse sending him halfway around and down like a brick chimney.

These pictures of the fight must be among the best ever made; they are a night with the gladiators, a round trip to Mars, they are practically everything. And yet there is missing from their flat black-and-white motion across the screen something vital—whatever it took to make the fight a fight and the air charged with uncertainty, everybody there with his nerves strung like a harp. Without the crowds and smoke and sharp cries growing through the preliminaries, the atmosphere becoming heavy as the fighters climb through the ropes in their bathrobes, the colour and rough tangibility and spirit of the place, the recorded action becomes more like a waxworks, however true to life—a little ghoulish, like the acting out of a murder. . . .

Well, it wasn't that way with us in the Stadium, where the idea of Joe Louis as the invincible torpedo died hard. We had been told. This Negro heavyweight is a sensation—young, purposeful on the up-grade, backing weight with speed, and speed with dynamite in both shoulders (speed and weight without that special slugger's leverage in the muscles of the shoulder and back are no good), and rounding it all off with an unflustered command of all the blows and their combinations and the angles from which they may be swung. And what is more, Louis is a killer, always has been a killer, sullen and cruelly efficient and heavy of eye. He doesn't grin, slap backs; doesn't have to.

Whereas Max Schmeling is thirty now, pretty old for a fighter. He has been The Champ, but is champ no longer, and was never very glorious. What has he got? A right, a clumsy technique, and lead in his pants. So the sports-writers have a lot of fun with him. Well, well, one more day before they lay Maxie in his pine box. Der Big Max will come in like a lion and go out like a light they say, and laugh. Spare a laugh for poor old Max, with one doubtful right arm and one foot in the grave.

And so it took quite a long time for the idea to sink in that the newspaper boys must have been talking about somebody else. And still the tension held, for even after the seventh round the fight was no certainty, there were no wise guys at the time who jumped up and announced that the fight was in the bag. That man was still worth watching, and when he flicked a shoulder you could see Schmeling's head go back, hard. Louis was instinctively game and a living danger so long as the feet held up under him, and even in the last round

*Associated Press picture*

# oves a Winnah

ıt Film; a brilliant piece of writing; "All this
: mirth and high spirits in the face of a man's
this is callous, knavish . . . somehow obscene."

managed to throw in a long right that would have mowed the whole working-press section down like a row of wooden soldiers. But not Max, he couldn't get Max down, and so as the people gradually caught on that Louis might be the Brown Bomber but old Max was outfighting and outlasting and gradually knocking the heart out of him, they began to shift, until Joe Louis as the people's favourite was lost sight of, during the last two or three rounds, by all except the Negroes in the audience, who were silent and seemed dazed.

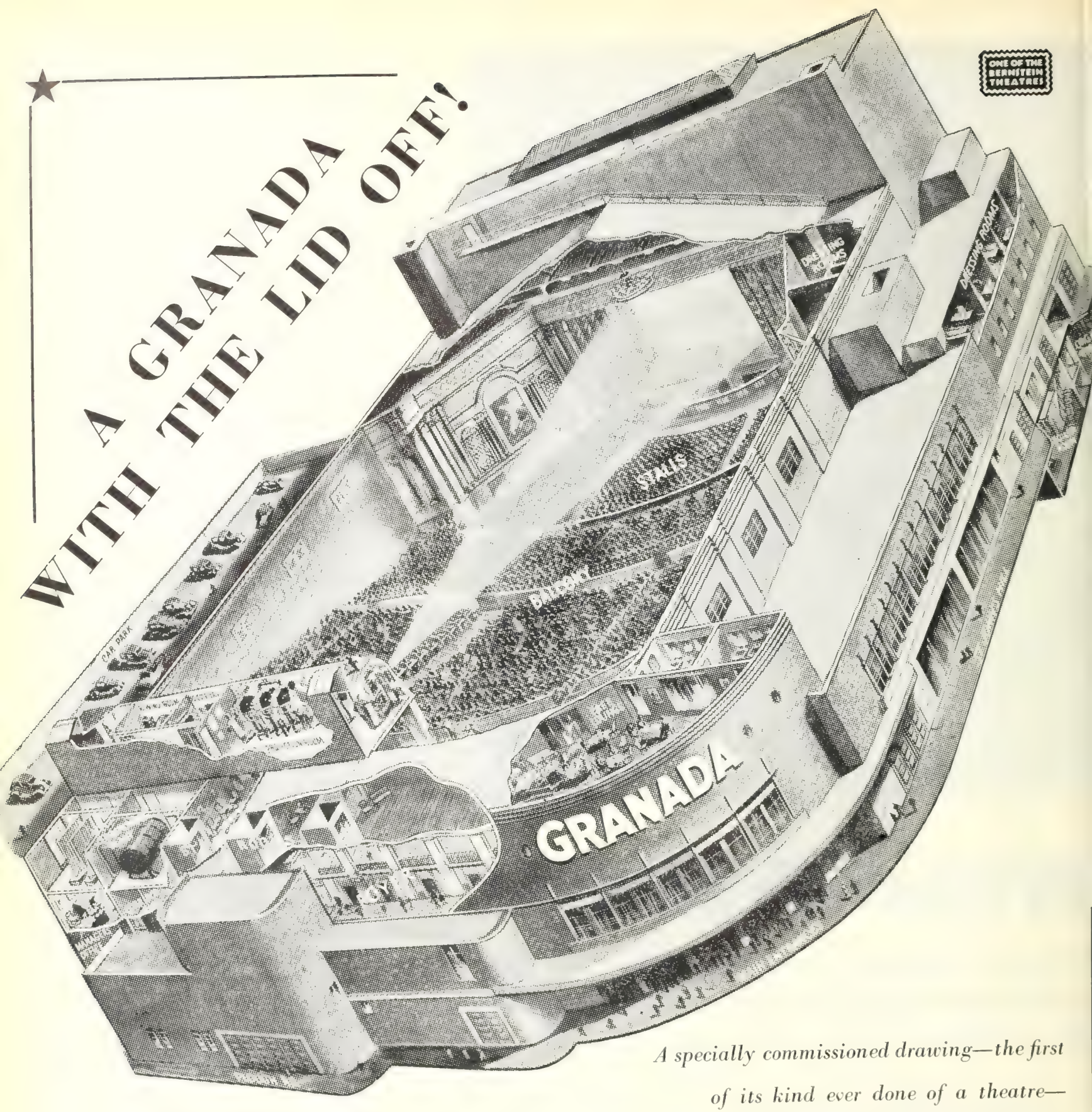
THE people weren't very decent about this fight. You wonder what they go for. You go yourself and are nervous as a chicken, more scared of Joe Louis than anybody who faced him in the ring. You watch the fight and don't know if it's Friday evening or San Francisco. And if you have a taste for imagination you imagine how the world of these two has shrunk to a right glove and a left glove and a tough weaving head above them, the yelling night air of the place falling away to a stillness of inhuman exertion and inner counsel. (Watch his right, watch his right, back a little and shift, watch, watch . . . just over the cheekbone, just below the ribs), to an almost visual chart of moves to make or block, and then the false move and the rain of blows, the giddy lights and whirling universe and gloves as big as box cars (get clear, get clear now, stay up, clinch for cover and stay up). And then the gradual shift to blackness, a nightmare of circling and blocking and striking out automatically, the body no longer under control as such, the remote movements of arms and legs coming as a dim surprise but as of no moment, the iron gloves in front and a painful brief rest in the seconds' corner with acid restoratives and rubs and slaps and out again. And then a heavy jar (get back, get away out, stay off) and then the big guns and a fall through space, thousands of faces through the ropes, a convulsion (*three*, *four*, *five*—the count, get up, knees up—*seven*, *eight*—knees up, try, move, get up) and the knees giving like jelly and the floor coming up and the body gone into it, nothing but distant noises, lights and rest with a bad throbbing.

But do people feel it this way, is there some such feeling for the tragedy of a man's being pounded groggy and the senses practically blown out of his body, some kind of awe or pity or something? It must be there is some, but it is certainly not vocal. Max Schmeling hasn't a chance, so they come in yelling for Joe Louis (here and there a rebel voice going counter to the crowd); then in the theatre they know Louis was beaten raw, and so come in yelling for Max (slug him, Maxie, oh, it's murder, oh, slug him). And for that pitiful figure of a man wobbling around out of his senses with the head being blasted off his shoulders, for that proud two hundred pounds of fighting power and skill, tottering and fumbling and shooting its weak lefts at the moon, there is no more compassion evident than shows itself in the laughter to see him bounce grotesquely on the floorboards, the hoots for his rubber knees, the final anxious clapping and rooting for the kill.

Of course the boys are fighters in a prize ring, it's their job, they are paid for it; no use getting soft on the subject. But all this turning of coats to be on the winning side, all this mirth and high spirits in the face of a man's ambition and body being broken under spotlights—this is callous, knavish, the presence of it in this theatre disheartening, somehow obscene. It would seem that the main part of our boasted interest in boxing as an art and sport is simply a desire to see blood let and tissue bruised. And as to another one of our pet national qualities, may we not put it that we are always cheering for the underdog just so long as we can find an underdog who is a ten-to-one shot to come home ahead and on top—the winnah.

*This is an extract from the film reviews by Otis Ferguson, collected in the book "Greta Garbo and the Night Watchmen," published by Jonathan Cape at 7s. 6d.*

# A GRANADA WITH THE LID OFF!

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# GUIDE to DECEMBER RELEASES

**Loretta Young in "Love is News"**

**MARRIED BEFORE BREAKFAST**

(*Edwin Marin—M.G.M.*) *Robert Young, Florence Rice.*

Another comedy in the happy-go-lucky cycle, but not quite up to standard. Young invents a shaving cream that does away with razors, and a razor blade factory pays him a large sum to keep the cream off the market. With this money he decides to take a trip around the world, but becomes involved with, and decides to help, a young couple who want to get married. There is a night of escapades including stolen cars, crashes and cops, before everything is satisfactorily straightened out.

**TOP OF THE TOWN**

(*Ralph Murphy—Universal.*) *Doris Nolan, George Murphy, Gregory Ratoff, Mischa Auer.*

Elaborate and costly musical. This ballet versus jazz film is studded with radio and vaudeville people and, on the whole, recalls those old Schubert revues—a big production and little else. It is a series of comedy sketches, songs, ballet, with a wind-up of shim-sham, truckin', etc., with nothing sufficiently outstanding to lift the picture out of the 'just average' class.

**WEE WILLIE WINKIE**

(*John Ford—20th Century-Fox.*) *Shirley Temple, Victor McLaglen, June Lang.*

Taken from a Kipling adventure tale concerning a young American widow and her daughter who travels to India to the child's grandfather, a colonel of a Highland Regiment stationed on the frontier, this melodrama launches Shirley Temple into a new phase of her career. Native insurrection, massacre, and the little girl going on a peace-pleading mission which lands her into the hands of the enemy, provide the melodramatic suspense.

**CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS**

(*Victor Fleming—M.G.M.*) *Freddie Bartholomew, Spencer Tracy, Lionel Barrymore, Melvyn Douglas.*

This film, the outstanding release of the month, is reviewed by John Grierson elsewhere in this issue.

**LOVE IS NEWS**

(*Tay Garnett—20th Century-Fox.*) *Tyrone Power, Loretta Young, Don Ameche.*

Hilarious and fast-moving comedy built around a front-page heiress's revenge on a reporter. Power as a reporter tricks heiress Young into an exclusive interview. She hits back by plastering his name across the nation's headlines as her future husband. Power is beseiged by reporters seeking a statement, and hounded by his editor, Don Ameche. Fresh comedy ideas, slickly handled and well acted, make this film first class entertainment.

**HILLS OF OLD WYOMING**

(*Nate Watt—Paramount.*) *William Boyd, George Hayes, Gail Sheridan.*

The Hopalong Cassidy series are well-produced and above the run of the average western. William Boyd stars as Cassidy; James Ellison, who graduated to *The Plainsman*, is replaced capably by Russell Haydon. This, the sixth in the series, is about trouble between Indians and cattlemen started by a deputy on the reservation, in which Cassidy takes a hand. Good, crisp action and some good vocal efforts.

**VICTORIA THE GREAT**

(*Herbert Wilcox—R.K.O.-Radio.*) *Anna Neagle, Anton Walbrook, H. B. Warner, Arthur Young.*

*World Film News* has already said its piece on the kind of history put around by films such as this. The film shows the accession of the young Victoria, the marriage with Albert, her widowhood and the close of her reign in the Jubilee. Closing sequences in colour. Echoes of great events punctuate the story at chosen intervals. Despite its faults, as a piece of filming this is in many ways impressive. And Anton Walbrook does a good job of acting.

**Tyrone Power in "Love is News"**

**SLIM**

(*Ray Enright—Warner Bros.*) *Pat O'Brien, Henry Fonda, Margaret Lindsay, Stuart Erwin.*

Story deals with hazards and importance of a power linesman's work, recording its influence on the lives of the three main characters, reaching its climax with O'Brien and Fonda climbing towers to repair live wires during the blizzard. Plenty of action, with the outstanding teamwork of O'Brien and Fonda overshadowing the feminine interest.

**TOPPER**

(*Norman McLeod—M.G.M.*) *Constance Bennett, Cary Grant, Roland Young.*

Fantastic comedy taken from Thorne Smith's novel about a madcap couple who are killed in a car crash following a tour of the night clubs. At loss to remember any good deed which will serve as a passport into the spirit world, these two earth-bound creatures decide to show Topper, a staid banker dominated by a fussy wife, how to enjoy life. Thanks to good acting, downright humour and an unusual plot, film provides above average entertainment.

**Other Releases include :**

**WE HAVE OUR MOMENTS**

A Universal crook comedy-drama, with Sally Eilers.

**23½ HOURS LEAVE**

A Grand National release with James Ellison.

**THE CASE OF THE STUTTERING BISHOP**

A First National picture with Donald Woods. For Perry Mason murder mystery fans.

**SAID O'REILLY TO McNAB**

A Gainsborough film with Will Fyffe. For determined supporters of the British Film Industry.

## *The Life of Emile Zola*

### REVIEW OF THE MONTH

(William Dieterle—First National.)
Paul Muni, Joseph Schildkraut, Gale Sondergaard.

Perhaps we are only little writers, puffing out only cheekfuls of fury, alongside the blasting typhoons hurled by such as Zola. But no writer who retains so much as a flicker of responsibility toward his calling will be able to see the film of the life of Emile Zola without entering into it and identifying himself with its hero, without feeling his soul augmented and his spine stiffened as he tries to grow into the image of the man whose works and actions most powerfully expressed the function of the writer in human society. There is only one theme to the story of Zola, and that is the search for truth, the persistent exposure of truth. And whether a writer is involved in the elaboration of a graceful style, whether he spends his life energy, as did Joyce, trying to break open a new form, whether he speaks only of beauty, or even of decay, he will tell you, in the last analysis, that he is seeking the truest way to present truth.

To the layman, *The Life of Emile Zola* may be nothing more than a film; a majestic, forceful retelling of the story of the most monstrous conspiracy in modern times—the Dreyfus case; the ever-recurring story of a judicial frame-up, of an innocent man sacrificed to prevent the exposure of criminally perverted forces of government, of corruption, prejudice, and bribery. The Evangelists had to write it, when they knew what happened to Jesus Christ. Zola had to write it when he learned what happened to Dreyfus. Maxwell Anderson had to write it, of Sacco and Vanzetti.

In Chicago there is such a case growing. Here, where I live, as you may know, a line of police, either blundering, or under vicious direction, fired into a steel strikers' demonstration, on Memorial Day, killing ten people. Since then, the traditional manœuvres of government bodies faced with the necessity of covering the blunders of underlings have taken place. First, the truth must be suppressed; essential documents, records, must be kept from the public; secondly, a scapegoat must be found to bear the blame. I have watched newspapers carefully building up prejudice, I have followed the statements and tactics of public officials as they elaborate their lie

**"A majestic, re-telling of the Dreyfus Case . . ."**

**"It makes me proud, strong again . . ."**

through stool-pigeons and provocateurs. As I sat through the film of Zola, I could only see the parallel of the technique, how alive it is, how pertinent it is to this day; is it always true that persons in authority, in high office, are pig-headedly stupid when confronted with the faults of their régime? Will they to this day conspire to set blame on innocent people, rather than manfully admit the wrongs in their own system? The truth—how are you going to get it to the people? How are you going to get any truth to the people? Whom will they believe?

That's when a writer gets the uttermost feeling of helplessness, of hopelessness, and yet within this despair is the sense that he must find some way to present the truth so that they will believe it, and the knowledge that miraculously, writers have succeeded in doing this before, succeeded in tearing down generals and kings.

That is in Zola: it makes one proud, it makes one feel strong again. We who live after Zola know how to watch for prejudice, yes, and the inspired method of his accusation is so overwhelming that we want to paraphase *J'Accuse* in every situation where prejudice must be exposed, where deliberate, manipulated injustice must be fought. —Meyer Levin, *Esquire*

The spirit which impelled Zola to espouse the cause of truth is an everlasting spirit which is needed to-day as greatly as when it operated in the life of the French writer. That is the message of the film in which Mr. Paul Muni plays the part of this nineteenth-century reformer.

The entire Dreyfus affair, which forms the climax of the film story, is presented with no indication whatsoever of the anti-Semitic motives which were included in the reasons for the popular outcry engineered against Dreyfus. In fact, there is no indication whatsoever in the film that Dreyfus was a Jew—if we exclude the brief shot of the official record of him on the French General Staff. In the earlier scenes of Zola's life, where he shares his poverty and his prophetic zeal with Cézanne (played by Vladimir Sokoloff), there is the popular appeal of the sentimental reformer somewhat in the manner of a permanently urbanised Mr. Deeds. But the best and most convincing part of the film is where Zola has become a famous and successful author, is decorated with the Légion d'Honneur, and courted by the Académie Française. As a sermon for our time, this film is both salutary and timely. One feels that its lessons for the persecutors of the Jewish people could have been usefully included.

—*The Jewish Chronicle*

## *Big City*

(Frank Borzage—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
Spencer Tracy, Luise Rainer.

This new starring team of Luise Rainer and Spencer Tracy might have been created for my emotional undoing. She has only to let a flicker of suffering twitch that lovely face, shaped like a tear gathering to fall, and I wince in sympathy.

Tracy has no tricks. But he is, I firmly believe, the greatest actor on the screen to-day. Watch him when the focus is not on him. He has the great artist's power to project his thoughts and feelings, to create and crystallise a world of illusion, without appearing to do anything at all. If you remember such excellent emotional films as *Bad Girl* and *Man's Castle* (another of Tracy's) you will recognise, in the presence of Frank Borzage as director, the explanation of this film's exquisite, movingly human moments. Borzage's ability to realise and convey the ordinary feelings of ordinary people makes the synthetic, glamorised puppet-romances of the screen seem vapid and boring.

—Stephen Watts, *The Sunday Express*

*Big City* is an interesting picture, with a weakness which emerges rather surprisingly as a good point. Having spent an hour in New York's Bowery, with Spencer Tracy as a taxi-driver and Luise Rainer as his loving wife—a pleasantly romantic story with an occasional flash of sincerity—we suddenly bump into a crazy gang fight at the dockside as the Berengaria pulls out for Europe. Yet, looking back on it, the scrap was the best thing in the picture. This is not, I think, a portrait likely to add to Tracy's high reputation. He plays his cabbie well, as he plays everything well. But the part has little depth to it. Miss Rainer is a baffling actress. She has abnormal camera charm, and can at times be delightful. But she has a tendency to posture, to treat the same things in the same manner all the time, so that her work suggests an artificiality which probably does not really belong there. This is odd, for at her best she can sustain a character unusually well—as in the case of *The Good Earth*.

—Connery Chappell, *The Sunday Dispatch*

**"The greatest actor on the Screen to-day . . ."**

## *Ali Baba Goes to Town*

(David Butler—Twentieth Century-Fox.)

Eddie Cantor, Roland Young, June Lang, Virginia Field.

Eddie Cantor's *Ali Baba Goes to Town* takes its trimmings from "The Arabian Nights," but it stays close to home all the time. A bright musical to cheer up the electorate at this season of the year, it shows us a Cantor vagrant, wily and airy, who floats off to Bagdad in a dream and persuades the Sultan to give up his throne, or his cushion or pouf, or whatever it is in Bagdad, and run for President. We see a nice election parade with slogans of a noble dignity, like "Every Man a Sultan, Every Home a Harem." Things go wrong with the vagrant at last, and he is in danger of being "berled in erl" until he discovers the word that lifts a magic carpet to the heavens, which word is none other than our old pet, "inflations". Perhaps you can gather from these little items somewhat the general idea. The film is helped by a pervading liveliness, some bright tunes, and Cantor's own particular version of a vagrant, a fancy vagrant who is a movie fan and autograph-seeker. I was also touched by the licence plates on the camels in various desert scenes. Altogether, looking upon the film rather as entertainment than as a political treatise, I am tempted to think it one of the lightest and most absurd of the Cantor series. After all, it's Eddie Cantor who is the hero, and not Walter Lippmann.

—John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

## *Double Wedding*

(Richard Thorpe—M.G.M.)

William Powell, Myrna Loy.

In the Marx Brothers films there is a Miss Margaret Dumont, who stands always for the sanities in a collapsing world. However ghastly the tricks of the brothers, Miss Dumont, as the patron of opera or the grande dame of the Social Registers, remains indomitable and well-mannered amid the chaos.

Miss Myrna Loy represents something of the sort in *Double Wedding*. Prim, severe, a manager of other people's lives, she is the rock of respectability against which beat the waves of Mr. Powell's lunacy. He lives in a trailer on a vacant lot, subject to no schedules. Miss Loy, on the other hand, has neatly-typed menus to tell her what she is to eat at her lonely meals, and her gardener has to water the plants in a downpour of rain because the weather forecasts said it would not rain.

I thought I caught more than one echo of the Marx brothers. Not only did Mr. Powell contrive to suggest a more dapper version of Groucho, but some of the situations, though still funny, were reminiscent. In one of the Marx films the brothers, besieged in a fortress, were rescued by the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, assorted fire brigades, police, and hundreds of Olympic runners. In *A Night at the Opera* 20 or 30 people piled themselves into a small steamer cabin.

Both these ideas are exploited in *Double Wedding*. In an uproarious climax thousands of passers-by are attracted to the trailer by rumours of the marriage; what seems like several hundred of them manage to force their way inside as uninvited guests.

This is first-class entertainment. After the two *Thin Man* films it was natural to fear an anti-climax. *Double Wedding* avoids it triumphantly—by dipping further into lunacy. The padding has simply been ripped from the padded cell—and we are still amused.

—R. MacC., *The Daily Telegraph*

*Double Wedding* doesn't make sense for a single instant, and isn't meant to. It is really custard pie slapstick in a luxury setting, rather as if the guests at Claridge's began to hurl cocktail sausages at one another.

Mr. Powell and Miss Loy, who have been happily married on the screen for years, and were beginning to settle down to parental responsibilities in the last picture we saw them in, are back again in the initial stages of Hollywood love—word-slinging and face-slapping. Miss Loy, a brisk business woman, smacks Mr. Powell on the head with anything handy, and Mr. Powell, in pyjamas, fur coat, and beret, slings Miss Loy through the door in a manner unusual in gentlemen.

It's all rather confusing to their admirers, and there's a faint, a very faint suggestion of grown-ups dressing up and playing a rowdy game to amuse the children. If you're set on being entertained at any cost, though, you may find it good, rough fun.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

### W.F.N. Selection.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *They Won't Forget* | * | * | * |
| *The Life of Emile Zola* | * | * | * |
| *Spanish Earth* | * | | |
| *The Prisoner of Zenda* | * | | |
| *Big City* | * | | |
| *Angel* | * | | |

### *Films also covered in this issue.*

*Land Without Bread*

*Ali Baba Goes to Town* (Stars reserved)

*Double Wedding*

*Ebb Tide*

*Stella Dallas*

100 *Men and a Girl* (Stars reserved)

*Car-Tune Portrait*

*Exclusive*

*Un Carnet de Bal*

*Pearls of the Crown*

*Tales from the Vienna Woods*

*The Last Night*

## *Ebb Tide*

(James Hogan—Paramount.)

Oscar Homolka, Ray Milland, Frances Farmer, Lloyd Nolan, Barry Fitzgerald.

As soon as this film was over, I rushed off to buy the book and so renew its acquaintance. Apart from the needless forcing of an Irish actor to play a Cockney (he might just as well have been made Irish), and apart especially from the opening and closing blasts of hideous music, this is an absolutely first-class transcription to the screen of a rich and enchanting novel. An astonishing amount of the original dialogue is retained, and the thing is carried through at an exciting pace. The squall is magnificent, as good as any I have ever seen in the cinema. Attwater's exquisitely rational form of insanity is brought out brilliantly in the film by an actor called Lloyd Nolan. Homolka, as the Dutchman, is better than I have seen him before, which is saying a very great deal. Frances Farmer is an extraordinarily pretty new actress, though, of course, I have sought in vain in the novel for the young lady with the gun. At least, we are wonderfully spared any love-making, even on the island. Yet nobody seems to have taken the slightest notice of *Ebb Tide*, and nobody presumably will. I daresay a single silly kiss would have made all the difference.

—James Agate, *The Tatler*

*Ebb Tide*, unevenly told in exuberant Technicolor, is the story of three beachcombers—a derelict skipper, a drunken Cockney, and an English "university man"—who are commissioned to sail an abandoned ship with a cargo of champagne from Papeete to Sydney.

The skipper is shot down in cold blood, the Cockney dies of vitriol burns, but the university man sails away with the boarding-school miss into a Technicolor sunrise, thus justifying the benefits of the higher education. Awarding the honours for this film (pardon me, this "thundering saga of the South Seas") I give first prize to the typhoon, second prize to Oscar Homolka for his portrait of the skipper, and divide the booby prize evenly between Lloyd Nolan (the maniac) and Barry Fitzgerald (the Cockney) for the most glowingly bad performances I have seen in years.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

**"A single kiss would have made all the difference . . ."**

**"Glamour in double dress . . ."**

## *Angel*

(Ernst Lubitsch—Paramount.)
Marlene Dietrich, Herbert Marshall, Melvyn Douglas, Edward Everett Horton, Herbert Mundin, Ernest Cossart.

*Angel* is a rich Hollywood dish that copies foreign recipes. It is Ernst Lubitsch, with Continental delight, tackling a plot to his liking in a far more serious manner than is his custom, but underneath the approach he makes to a problem piece there is to be found the faint perfume of Lubitsch drawing-room (and bedroom) subtlety which has served him so well for many years.

*Angel* is a drama more than it is a comedy, laugh lines being restricted almost to servants, who include Edward Everett Horton, Ernest Cossart and Herbert Mundin. They are intensely interesting service characters from whom much more footage could well have been accepted. Of the trio, Cossart gets the biggest chance to make good. He is the particularly engaging butler in the swank household of a British diplomat.

Miss Dietrich is glamour in double dress. This time she is wearing eyelashes that you could hang your hat on and every now and then the star flicks 'em as though a dust storm was getting in the way. Marshall is excellent as the duped husband. The usual smooth performance is obtained from Douglas, but, as the luckless, persistent lover who wants to take Miss Dietrich from her hubby at any cost, he is not a particularly sympathetic character.

—*Variety*

It's a diverting film, very neatly finished off with the light Lubitsch touch. The dear old triangle situation, lavishly overdressed, with lots of sequins and heavy Jacobean furniture, takes on a freshness again with all this sumptuous gloss and holds us charmed. We see Marlene as the neglected wife of a consequential British diplomat, a sort of Anthony Eden role played serenely and agreeably by Herbert Marshall. Getting a bit dismal, this wife flits to Paris and straight to a highly questionable, if altogether circumspect, establishment run by a "Grand Duchess" for the benefit of lone males of wealth. She ventures into romance, and Melvyn Douglas is smooth and urbane as the gallant who almost breaks up the lady's marriage. Laura Hope Crews does a superb bit as this Grand Duchess, and I think, by way of carping, that more of her humour would have served to brighten the film's somewhat grave atmosphere. However, that would have put the film on the scandalous side, which heaven forbid.

—John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

## *Stella Dallas*

(King Vidor—United Artists.)
Barbara Stanwyck, John Boles, Anne Shirley.

Criticism must always be a personal opinion, but thinking it over I assert—though with fear of contradiction—that Barbara Stanwyck, by her performance in *Stella Dallas*, has turned in the year's best acting job on the screen. To those who still sniff at film acting as compared with the theatre, I go farther and declare that the West End stage not only fails to show anything as good to-day; but has not given us such superb work from any actress for at least three years. In *Stella Dallas* Barbara Stanwyck plays a small-town young woman doomed by her inherently vulgar nature to be a social liability to her husband. Sympathy arises because we know she will some time realise that she is the proverbial sow's ear which can never be made into a silk purse; and because her pathetic, cleverly over-dressed pushfulness simply leads to deterioration, divorce, and her daughter's humiliation. Her artistry never strikes a false note, and we share the anguish of a tortured soul's renunciation and defeat.

—P. L. Mannock, *The Daily Herald*

Twelve years ago Samuel Goldwyn had two continents weeping over the sad case of Stella Dallas, golden-hearted vulgarian, who sacrificed body and soul to bring up her daughter as a lady.

I should say off-hand that the finer points of the old direction are missing. King Vidor has handled his emotional tale by rule-of-three; his types, vulgar and refined, are plainly labelled, his approach to a scene is regular, his crises mere blocks of feeling, familiar in outline. Barbara Stanwyck as Stella, takes the style from her director, and John Boles, as the refined Dallas, gives a performance without surprises. Only young Anne Shirley, who plays the daughter, is apt to play merry hell with the Goldwyn-Vidor conception. Her part is about as well done as anyone could do it; fresh, wistful, frank, and uncomfortably spontaneous.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

## *100 Men and a Girl*

(Henry Koster—Universal.)
Leopold Stokowski, Deanna Durbin, Adolphe Menjou, Mischa Auer.

Aside from its value as entertainment, which is considerable, Universal's 100 *Men and a Girl* reveals the cinema at its sunny-sided best. Hollywood sheds a commiserative tear over the plight of unemployed artists and suggests a solution; get together as a symphony orchestra, find a sponsor and wangle Leopold Stokowski into serving as guest conductor. Selah! Selah, indeed, in 100 *Men and a Girl*, but only because the unemployed music-makers—Adolphe Menjou, Mischa Auer among them—had the good fortune to have Deanna Durbin as their organiser, agent, manager and promoter. Being a joyous sprite, with an astonishingly mature soprano, an exuberant nature and an abiding faith in mankind, even in womankind, Miss Durbin makes the impossible seem only moderately improbable. Over the highs and lows of symphony and comedy she weaves her refreshing course; not a great singer and certainly not a great actress, but a wholesome and spring-like personality, one of the nicest the screen has given us in a long time.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

## *Car-Tune Portrait*

(Max Fleischer—Paramount.)

Most people number among their acquaintances the human approximation to a Donald Duck or a Pluto, and the lion conductor in Mr. Max Fleischer's *Car-Tune Portrait* is a familiar type. He is earnest, he is sincere, he is a lion with a Purpose. He addresses the audience in a manner which is a mixture of commercial showmanship and moral "uplift".

The orchestra is at one with his conductor's baton, and then something goes wrong, a false note creeps in, a joke is made and the concert collapses into an uproarious free-fight. There is something in these animal creations which is charmingly reminiscent of the moods of childhood. At one moment intensely and self righteously solemn; the next throwing all restraint to the winds and thinking it the best joke in the world to break a violin over a neighbour's head. Mr. Fleischer's animals are not as highly individualised as are those of Mr. Walt Disney, though it will take a long time to forget those hippopotami blowing away through their instruments as though their lives depended on it.

—*The Times*

*Critical Summary.*

*The Max Fleischer cartoons have never received their just recognition, for, like all other cartoon pictures, they have been hopelessly over-shadowed by the work of Walt Disney. Certainly Disney has always been a long way ahead of his rivals, in his ability to create strongly individual characters, in his composition and colouring, and above all in his fantasy, revealed just recently at its exquisite best in "The Old Mill". But the Fleischer cartoons have also been frequently outstanding—one recalls with pleasure "The Elephant Never Forgets", "Cinderella", "Time For Love" and "Dancing On the Moon", with their engaging theme songs and most noticeable stereoscopic effects—and besides this series of Colour Classics there is also, of course, the inimitable Popeye, to prove that Disney is not the only person who can create forceful characters. Popeye has recently appeared in colour, following Mickey Mouse's lead in "The Band Concert", and his spinach is almost as well known as Donald Duck's "Wanna Fight?". Fleischer, no doubt, will never make anything like "Water Babies", "Lullaby Land" or "The Old Mill", but he has yet the art of working in a happy world of unreality and make-believe, and his little pictures should be given the praise they merit.*

**"Makes the impossible seem only moderately improbable . . . "**

## Exclusive

(Alexander Hall—Paramount.)
Fred MacMurray, Charlie Ruggles, Frances Farmer.

It is a curious thing that newspaper pictures, even the first-rate ones, such as *The Front Page* and *Gentlemen of the Press* and *Sensation* have not been great hits with the public. Perhaps cinema-goers think that reporters should be read and not screened. In this picture Fred MacMurray and Charlie Ruggles are held up as examples of honest, hard-working newspapermen. They work for a proprietor who is on the side of law and order, and they despise the yellow, sensation-seeking efforts of their rival (and more successful) newspaper run by a gangster (Lloyd Nolan). Ruggles comes out best in the picture with his portrait of a middle-aged reporter. His last address (as he dies from gangster bullets, having written his final story) about how to become a good newspaperman is hard to bear.

—Ian Coster, *The Evening Standard*

*Exclusive* strikes me as a sorry victim to the common complaint of being over strenuous. The excitement in it is so frenzied as to deaden its effect. Its detail is so overwhelming as to appear stupid and cumbrous. The improbabilities of the tale transcend all recent imaginings. If you can find edification in racketeering by journalism, the habits of criminals and reporters who behave as no criminals or reporters could ever have behaved, you will rejoice in this picture. Not even the brilliant acting of Charlie Ruggles and the virility of Fred MacMurray can compensate for the rubbishy violence of this excursion into crime. I am the more concerned with the attack made in this film upon newspapers in America because its author professes that the incidents related in it were inspired by his own journalistic experiences. If this is correct I cannot resist the suspicion that Mr. Alexander Hall has lent an exaggeration and a fury to them which make them unacceptable.

—Sydney W. Carroll, *The Sunday Times*

*Critical Summary.*

*Of all American institutions which Hollywood, wittingly or unwittingly, has held up for the public scorn, none has been so consistently degraded in the filmgoer's eyes as the American press. No creation of Hollywood is quite so soulless as the newshound in full cry. This picture is, therefore, remarkable since it introduces us to an American journal with some code of ethics, some sense of decency. It even goes so far as to propound the theory that somewhere there is a heaven for newspapermen, surely a wholly untenable supposition in the light of "The Front Page" and "Five Star Final".*

## Un Carnet De Bal

(Julien Duvivier—French.)
Harry Baur, Raimu, Louis Jouvet, Fernandel, Blanchar, Françoise Rosay.

This is not only one of the major films the French have ever made, but also one of the grandest films Hollywood never made. Mechanically, the story is built on the same structure as *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*; i.e., it uses an object, once associated with a group of people, as a focus for pursuing the tangents of their various lives. This film's focus is the girlish, first-dance programme of a rich, ripe widow who traces the scattered lives of eight young waltz partners who had once sworn to love her forever. Owing to the brilliant all-star cast, these partners turn out to be some of the greatest male actors of France—Louis Jouvet, in the superb rôle of a cynical night-club owner and thieves' mouthpiece; Harry Baur, as a musical monk; Raimu, as a Midi mayor about to marry his cook; Fernandel, as a barber with a passion for card tricks; and Blanchar, as a one-eyed abortionist on the waterfront of Marseilles. Two of the waltzers have already died, one leaving a crazed widow, played by Françoise Rosay in the truest, least truculent enactment of insanity the French screen has ever recorded. The sum of the plot sounds sinister, literary, and melodramatic. Because of the energetic, dry directing of Duvivier this movie bulges merely with excitement, surprise, and adult, humane humour.

—Paris Correspondent, *The New Yorker*

## The Pearls of the Crown

(Sacha Guitry and Christian Jaque—French.)
Sacha Guitry, Jacqueline Delubac, Lyn Harding.

M. Sacha Guitry is bold and experimental in his treatment of films, but this is an experiment to be discarded. He sets out not to tell one, two, or even three stories—although his plot, if it can so be called, depends on the three missing pearls of the crown—but a multitude of them. He tells them in three different languages, and ransacks the ages and spoils the climbs in the pursuit. Kings, Queens, Cardinals, and Ministers come and go, are switched on the screen only to disappear before one's eyes with the smoothness and rapidity of soup-plates at the hands of expert waiters, and, at the end, the dazed spectator has the sensation that he has been treated to a reading of "Little Arthur's History" and hustled round the Vatican, Versailles, and the Tower all in a space of an hour and a half, with an incidental trip to Abyssinia to say nothing of a final tour of the Normandie.

—*The Times*

There are altogether seven pearls and Guitry indulges his merry fancy in a modern and absurd investigation to clear up what happened to the three that did not find their way to the British crown. This finishes in Silly Symphony mood, with one of them being dropped overboard from the Normandie and falling straight into the mouth of a waiting oyster. These amusing scenes are out of tone with the rest. But there can be no absolute rules for so oddly constructed a narrative. With all its complicated and episodal contrasts, *The Pearls of the Crown* claims attention as an interesting and unusual picture.

—A. T. Borthwick, *The News Chronicle*

## Tales from the Vienna Woods

(Georg Jacoby—Austrian.)
Magda Schneider, Wolf Albach Retty, Leo Slezak.

*Tales from the Vienna Woods* is as plummy as *strudel*, as thin as *schnitzel*, and as sweet as *schlag obers*. It is a romance with songs from the Strauss motives set in a post-war Vienna in which a motor mechanic owns a castle, a Russian prince runs a garage, and the arrival of an heiress from America sets the whole town celebrating. It is tuneful and pleasant, but not an important picture, except for the appearance in it of Leo Slezak, the W. C. Fields of opera. In a world growing yearly poorer

**"Kings, Queens, Cardinals, come and go . . . "**

in true clowning, every appearance of Mr. Slezak is important. His rich fruity voice, his unctuous walk, his lordly chicanery, make up a personality as rich in comic genius as any in the modern cinema.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

A romantic, humorous, conventional story has been taken off the shelves—but it serves its purpose admirably, by introducing an ancient castle, a poor but handsome nobleman, an American millionairess and a case of mistaken identity. The whole affair is quite charming. The love story of the little journalist and the Count, who sells motor-cars, doesn't matter. It is the lilt of the waltz, the recapturing of an old-world Vienna, that appeals.

—Gale Pedrick, *The Star*

## The Last Night

(Yu. Raizman—Russian).

The development of assurance and maturity in the Soviet Union is exemplified by two points in this film: the ability to present capitalists as people with courage and loyalty to their principles; and humour. The story deals with the relationship of the family of a worker with that of his employer during the final struggle for power in Moscow in 1917. The head of the working-class family feels an affection and obedience toward his boss which it is very difficult for his revolutionary sailor son to break down. At a college dance, Kuzma, the latter's youngest brother, falls in love with Lena, the daughter of his father's boss. But as they dance, there comes the dull sound of an explosion. The dancers crowd to the windows and, in one of the most striking episodes of the film, we look down through the darkness at the town and listen to the silence, broken only by the scurrying of feet and the rattling of a droshky across the cobbled square. The bias is inevitably toward the working class family. Kuzma saves Lena from arrest by the workers; there is a hint of a love idyll beneath the shell-fire and of the possibility of friendship between Lena and Kuzma's mother. But the class-division reasserts itself when Lena gets back to the protection of the Whites. And, although the workman has been apologetic and genial when his boss is under arrest, the latter riddles him with bullets when the tables are turned. The fighting scenes in the square and at the station show that the Russians have nothing to learn from either Hollywood or Chicago, and make the film as gripping merely as melodrama as "G-Men."

—Henry Adler, *W.F.N.*

# PEOPLE OF THE STUDIOS

## Great Britain

### Denham

A nice little war has been brewing between United Artists, Alexander Korda and Oscar Deutsch on the one hand, and all the other distributors on the other. Bone of contention is whether the present system of delayed releases in Britain shall continue or whether the trade can be persuaded to generally release their pictures immediately after the West End showing.

Argument is that the sooner the film is shown provincially after the build-up it gets in London, the bigger the audiences will be. The public's interest in a film dies down after a month or two. Another big point in favour is that receipts on the pictures can be touched at an earlier date than before. (In the U.S. 50% of the cost of a picture is realised within three months of its first showing. In Britain nine or ten months frequently elapse between the completion of a film and its general release.)

It now looks as though Mr. Oscar Deutsch and his Odeons will be able to force the pace they want. General release for *Victoria the Great* was formally fixed for early spring when the excitement had subsided—but Deutsch stepped in with an offer and the picture is to be put over on his entire circuit on December 27th, at the peak of the Christmas season. Which suits Mr. Wilcox, too.

At a meeting of the Board of Directors of London Films it was disclosed that during the past financial eight months, the company had shown a profit of £35,839 subject to depreciation. It was decided to restore the pay cuts of all workers whose salary was up to and including £10 per week. At the moment Korda himself is in America consummating the deal for the purchase of the Chaplin-Fairbanks-Pickford shares in United Artists.

Merle Oberon is the star of *Over the Moon*, only London Film Production at present on the floor. Picture is in Technicolor, and adapted from an original story by Robert Sherwood. Rex Harrison, recently in *Men are not Gods* and *Storm in a Teacup*, plays the lead with Louis Borell. Direction is by William K. Howard, who before starting this picture spent a week or two on the remake of Graham Greene's *Four Dark Hours*. Latter film was made by William Cameron Menzies (of *Things to Come*) as a New World Production earlier in the year.

Donald Stannard, Robert Donat's stand-in who was selected by Bruce Woolfe for *Health and Strength*, the Gaumont-British Instructional film, was spotted by Louis B. Mayer when the latter was in England, and signed up on a long-term contract. He gets a rôle in *A Yank at Oxford* before going out to Hollywood.

First picture under Herbert Wilcox's new R.K.O.-Radio deal will be *The Romance of Madame Tussaud*, based on the life of the famous French aristocrat and written by her grandson, Louis Tussaud. Producer has been seeking Dietrich for the lead.

### Beaconsfield

Herbert Wilcox Productions have moved from Pinewood to Beaconsfield for their smaller pictures. Company's current film is *Blondes for Danger*, comedy-thriller with Gordon Harker. Jack Raymond (who made *The Frog*) is directing from a script based on the book by Evadne Price, authoress of "The Phantom Light" at the Haymarket Theatre.

Wilcox's second for British Lion release will be *Nippy*, originally planned for production at Denham with Anna Neagle starring. Jean Gillie now gets the title rôle, with Gordon Harker, Ralph Reader and Richard Hearne in the cast.

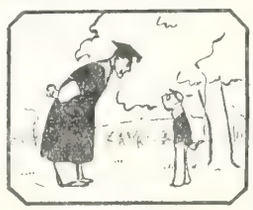
### Elsewhere . . .

George Formby's current picture at Ealing is *I See Ice*. Anthony Kimmins wrote the story and directs.

New company, Glenrose Productions, started at Cricklewood with *The Vengeance of Kali*. Stewart Rome (whose last picture was *Wings of the Morning*) stars, Gerald Blake directs.

George King is making *Sexton Blake and the Master Criminal* out at Shepperton, with George Curzon and Tod Slaughter in the title rôles.

John Lodge and Margaret Lockwood get top spots in Gainsborough's *Bank Holiday*, before the cameras at Islington. Director is Carol Reed, whose *Talk of the Devil* received considerable praise from the critics.



Otto Kruger plays the lead in *The Housemaster*, Ian Hay comedy in production at Elstree, and Herbert Brenon directs. Pictures planned to follow are *The Guard*, scripted by James Bridie, *The Star of the Circus*, with John Lodge, and *Yes, Madam*, with Bobbie Howes and Frances Day.

William Dewhurst, benign bomb-maker in *Sabotage*, died last month. His last rôle was the butler in Jessie Matthews' *Sailing Along* at Pinewood.

## America

### Warner Bros.

Mervyn LeRoy started shooting on his new production *Food for Scandal* on November 15th. Carole Lombard and Fernand Gravet (of *The King and the Chorus Girl*) get the top spots, and picture is in Technicolor.

LeRoy is ready to go through with his United Artists deal which will set him up as a producer-owner like Goldwyn and Korda, as soon as the other principals complete their financial arrangements.

Anatole Litvak, who directed the screen version of *Tovarich* with Claudette Colbert and Charles Boyer, has been signed to a three-year contract calling for two pictures a year.

*The Life of Paul Jones*, which started out a couple of years back as an eight-reel Warner epic with James Cagney in the name rôle, has dwindled to the status of a two-reeler in colour, with John Lytell as Jones.

Current Errol Flynn-Bette Davis picture is Sheridan's comedy, *School for Scandal*.

### United Artists

Big question here is "What's Selznick going to do?" When the Korda-Goldwyn deal is fixed, it is unlikely that he will continue his releasing arrangement with United Artists. Alternatively to doing so, it has been rumoured at various times that he will (*a*) buy up a piece of United Artists; (*b*) buy up Universal with his brother Myron, now an agent; (*c*) go back to M.G.M.; (*d*) produce for Paramount.

With the completion of *Tom Sawyer* production came to a standstill on the Selznick International lot, and the cameras get a rest for four months or so. Studio remains active, however, with preparations for other films—among them, *Gone with the Wind*. The still-continued ballyhoo on the latter picture is probably unprecedented in picture exploitation. The film is already so overpublicised that by the time the picture really gets under way next year the trade will have trouble devising a campaign to top the present one. Reason for all the publicity was the wild guessing on who would get the Scarlet O'Hara role.

A separate print of *Tom Sawyer* is being made for release in Great Britain. William Hamilton Burside, English sales consultant, helped in eliminating American colloquialisms, dialogue and situations that might not have been understood by a British audience. Filming of the picture took a good six months, as on two occasions the footage was scrapped and a new beginning made. The final try took 63 days.

### M.G.M.

Hunt Stromberg, who produced *The Thin Man* and *Maytime* for M.G.M., and won the Academy Award for *The Great Ziegfeld*, is as good a man as any to look after the productions which Irving Thalberg had planned. On his recent visit to England and France he worked on the screen adaptation of *Idiot's Delight* with Robert Sherwood, did some important casting for *Marie Antoinette*, and collected local colour for the latter film. Back in Hollywood, he has been looking around for the right man to play Louis XVI, and finally settled on Peter Lorre, who made an excellent screen test. Norma Shearer, now back at work, has the lead in both this and *Idiot's Delight*.

Mr. Stromberg started as a sports writer on the *St. Louis Times*, turning out film scenarios for £20 apiece and always leaning towards the show business. Later he worked for the original Goldwyn company as advertising and publicity director.

Original comedy for Garbo, *Love is not so Simple*, is being readied by Melchior Lengyel, who wrote Dietrich's *Angel*. Story has a continental background, and is Garbo's first breakaway from serious drama.

First gangster on the screen was Edward G. Robinson, who with *Little Caesar* started a series of pictures arousing public indignation. Now, with most of America's gangsters behind bars or in their

graves, Robinson is *The Last Gangster*, in a film which we are told is not being made as a preachment. Edward Ludwig, who made *Manhattan Madness*, *Fatal Lady* and *Her Husband Lies*, is the director, since Fox refused to loan-out Roy Del Ruth.

The Freddie Bartholomew controversy ended with an out-of-court settlement. The star now takes a weekly salary of £400 for forty weeks in the year instead of the former £220, and has a seven-year optional contract. As a result of the second court action which involved him, he was allowed to remain under the guardianship of Millicent Bartholomew instead of returning to his parents.

After splitting "for ever" last April, Laurel and Hardy are together again in Hal Roach's *Swiss Cheese*, with John Blystone directing. Film is described as a Tyrolean musical.

Crazy comedy has a new convert—Ronald Colman. Star has agreed to appear under the Hal Roach banner in *Fancy Free*, original comedy by Eric Hatch, who wrote *My Man Godfrey*.

Melvyn Douglas and Warren Williams are in *Arsene Lupin*, which Richard Thorpe is directing.

## Columbia

Tay Garnett has closed a deal with the Company to direct *Tradewinds*, using 40,000 feet of sea shots taken on his world cruise. Gene Towne and Graham Baker are at work on the screenplay, and Cary Grant is set as star.

Grace Moore, who has never got on too well with Columbia, has been balking at making pictures "off the cuff." She is under contract with the company to make one picture, with options for another two—but when offered the script of *Easy Sailing* some while back she was quoted as saying: "I'm tired of going into production and having my picture shot off the cuff. I will not be rushed through a picture in four weeks time. I have my standing in the world of music to maintain and I am not going to have music foisted on me." We hear that of late she has been talking a picture deal with Sam Goldwyn.

*The Burning Secret*, by Stephen Zweig, has been purchased to star Gloria Swanson in her first picture for the studio under her present contract. The continental background of the story has been changed to the United States. Stephen Morehouse Avery, who wrote *The Gorgeous Hussy*, has been scripting.

## Paramount

Big picture in production here is *The Buccaneer*, in the Cecil B. DeMille tradition of spectacle, which will keep the cameras busy for a good three months, and 1,700 extras busy for most of that time, too. Franciska Gaal, who has been an important stage and screen actress in Germany and Hungary (her native country) has the female lead and makes her Hollywood debut. Fredric March plays opposite, supported by Akim Tamiroff, Ian Keith and Charles Bickford.

According to a detailed complaint, Paramount libelled *The Police Gazette* in its Mae West picture *Klondike Annie*, which depicted Miss West reading the *Gazette* in a bordello. It was alleged that the monthly magazine was besmirched, and "that by reproducing the trade-mark masthead of the *Gazette*, Paramount sought to convey that the publication is commonly read by persons of low, vulgar and indecent tastes, traits and character, and meant also to convey the idea that the publication was generally to be found in resorts for dissolute and unchaste persons." Complaint alleges that the *Gazette's* circulation dropped £10,000 worth as a result.

Don Ameche moves over to Paramount on a loan out from 20th Century-Fox to co-star with Dorothy Lamour in *Ensenada*. Starting date is scheduled as January 1st. In return for Ameche Paramount lends Randolph Scott to Fox for *Rebecca of Sunnyside Farm*.

George Raft is currently making *Spawn of the North*, with Henry (*Souls at Sea*) Hathaway directing.

## 20th Century-Fox

The Walter Winchell-Ben Bernie feud, begun in *Wake up and Live*, is continued in *Love and Hisses*, featuring Simone Simon. Sidney Lanfield, responsible for *Sing, Baby, Sing*, *Thin Ice* and *Wake Up and Live*, is directing. Music and lyrics are by Mack Gordon and Harry Revel—with two numbers sung by Miss Simon.

Cameras are waiting to turn on *Jean*, just as soon as Annabella and William Powell can get together. Script is taken from Ladistas Bus-Fekete's play, "The Lady Has a Heart," now on Broadway.

Darryl Zanuck, Fox chief, recently announced: "20th Century-Fox will abandon the type of all-star musical that it started. Those musicals that had a conglomeration of types of people, big names, small names, names selected from some stand-out entertainment in the past, are no more with us. They are now hurting the business instead of helping in the sale of tickets." He made it quite clear, however, that his decision to abandon all-star musicals did not include productions with stars from his lot such as Sonja Henie, Eddie Cantor, Alice Faye, or the Ritz Brothers. He added that when they started making musicals with James Cagney and dramatic stars and everyone or anyone who could carry a tune, he felt that it was time for his company to stop what it had started.

## Universal

Company seems to have had its full quota of contract troubles, on account of Deanna Durbin. Universal executives went into a huddle and finally revised the old contract giving the 14-year-old starlet £250 a week instead of £50. But representatives of Miss Durbin demand £400, plus a voice in the selection of stories.

Squabble also arose over the direction of *Mad About Music*, the current Durbin musical. Henry Koster, director of *Three Smart Girls* and 100 *Men and a Girl*, turned down the job for fear of becoming typed as "the man who makes the Durbin pictures," and declared he wanted to build up his name through working with other players. Assignment was also refused by other of Universal's directors who feared difficulties in keeping up the standard set by the star's first two hits.

Norman Taurog, who has just finished *You Can't Have Everything*, finally consented to take on the job, though not until after several weeks negotiating. Koster will probably do the Danielle Darrieux picture as his next.

## Italy

The big deal between Hal Roach and Vittorio Mussolini, mentioned in "People of the Studios" last month, fell through a week or two after it had been announced. While Roach put forward no detailed explanation of how and why the negotiations broke down, it is certain that pressure was brought from the inside, and that he was loth to go against the anti-Fascist feeling widespread in Hollywood.

In spite of Hal Roach remarking with emphasis that young Mussolini wrote the screen column for his father's paper and was the only one to knock Italian productions and praise American films, the film capital granted Mussolini a cool reception, nick-naming him "War is Fun" Vittorio.

Three polite brush-offs in one day by actors on lots in production, the sending of ambulances to Spain, autographed by 100 players, the concerted drive on the part of the anti-Nazi league against his presence in the town, and President Roosevelt's Chicago speech against war-diseased nations, proved too much for the 21-year-old son of Il Duce, who departed after only a short stay.

The following full-page advertisement was among those that greeted him: "TODAY—Benito Mussolini confers with Hitler in Berlin . . . TOMORROW—Vittorio Mussolini arrives in Hollywood. He asked for—and received—the privilege of being the first aviator to bomb helpless Ethiopians. Anyone has the right to be in America, but we submit that his presence here is not an occasion for celebrations or social fêtes. Those who are welcoming him are opening their arms to a friend of Hitler and an enemy of democracy. TONIGHT—We call attention to the presence in democratic America of this protagonist of fascism and nazism . . ."

The papers also reprinted passages from Vittorio's articles in *Il Popolo d'Italia*, to challenge Roach's statement that he "knocked Italian made productions and praised American films." Among those quoted were:

"The humoristic papers have found a new outlet for their quips at the expense of celebrated stars and cinematograph magnates with the habitual Havana cigar in their mouths, and the public are given further proof of the lack of intelligence and seriousness to be found in the mass of people who live in the Californian Mecca. Is this an effect of the sun?"

Answering his own hypothetical question as to what the rest of the world would do if Hollywood closed down for a year ("a kind of flood without the ark, which would be blessed by the goodly few . . . never again to see the ears of Clark Gable, or Dietrich's legs, or Garbo's feet, or Joan Crawford's mouth, or Katharine Hepburn's nose, or Luise Rainer's eyes, or Goldwyn's and Ziegfeld's ballet girls . . .") he considers the case of each European country, winding up with this regarding Italy:

"Perhaps in the space of five or six years we may get ahead. In any case we are equipped and ready. We are working at full swing and more enthusiastically, and we shall soon fill Cine City. Even the smallest capitalists will have an opportunity of doing their part and of making an economic film. . . ."

# COCKA

**Compiled by**

## BREATHLESS HUSH DEPT.

*Freddie Bartholomew, the clever British boy star, has caused some anxiety to the Metro-Goldwyn studio, by showing signs that he was losing his English accent.*

*The officials contacted "Aunt Cissy", Freddie's mentor, and told her that she must safeguard the boy's broad "A's" and cure faulty aspirates.*

*It sounds like a typical Hollywood story, but a friend assures me that when Freddie says his prayers at night, after invoking blessings on Aunt Cissy, his parents and other relatives and friends, he beseeches that he be permitted to retain his English accent!*

*—News Item.*

As soon as we read this and realised what a tremendous field for research it opened up, we contacted our Bedside Correspondent and suggested that he weigh in with a little human interest stuff on the subject of the requests made by film-stars in their nightly supplications. Just to save him from himself, we took it upon ourselves to compile a list of suitable bedsides for him to visit.

If we can believe our Bedside Correspondent—and there is no reason why we should—the majority of stars are either sent to bed by their parents, or carried there by friends, and

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO OUR REGISTERED READERS ONLY.

their prayers are, therefore, of the sketchiest nature. Others employ the time usually spent in prayer in standing before their mirrors, rehearsing their acceptance of an Academy Award.

An exception to this is Shirley Temple, who usually finds time to lisp a few lines and signs off by wishing a million-dollar set of freckles on all the Infant Prodigies toddling frantically in her wake. Clark Gable invariably asks for advice about his ears, and Herbert Marshall for strength to continue doing the Decent Thing. Fred Astaire indents for a good arch-supporter, while from the bedside of Joe E. Brown there rises a nightly plea that he may one day be granted a real man-sized mouth. Something more on the lines of Miss Crawford's.

But by far the most poignant prayer that came to the ears of our Bedside Correspondent was that of a British film-producer, who hitched up his fur-lined nightie, sank on to his chubby little knees and, after invoking blessings on the Quota Act, voiced an impassioned plea for assistance with his aspirates and police protection at the next general meeting.

## Kiss and Make Up

*The lips of Greta Garbo, Lily Pons, Gertrude Niessen and Lyda Roberti must be especially made up after their kissing scenes for the screen, according to Max Factor, veteran make-up artist, who terms them "heavyweight kissers."*

*Billie Burke, Loretta Young, Mae West and Alice Faye, on the other hand, are "lightweight kissers", whose rouge and powder are hardly disturbed by their romantic moments before the cameras.*

*—News Item.*

Greta Garbo,
Lily Pons,
Kiss like playful
Mastodons.
Miss Roberti
And Miss Niessen
Much resemble
Charging bison,*
When advancing
To bestow
Kisses on
Their movie beaux.
This is plainly
Apt to shake up
Mr. Factor's
Precious make-up.

Mighty Mae
And lithe Loretta
Are, they say,
A whole lot better.
Billie Burke
And Alice Faye
Also work
A gentler way.
Each of these
When she caresses
With no vim
Or vigour presses.
So from their
Inviting lips,
It's claimed the colour
Never slips.

I've a hunch
That I could move it—
Boy! for just one chance to
prove it!

**Pronounced "beeson", whether you like it or not.*

## SAYINGS

"Much of the money wasted by foreign producers has been attributable . . . to an inability to understand our language."—*British Association of Film Directors.*

"The word 'lover' in the United States so frequently connotes an illicit sex relation."—*The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America Inc.*

## MY, HOW YOU'VE GROWN!

The transition of Shirley Temple from irresponsible moppet to winsome young woman, skipping that awkward, lanky stage we other girls had to go through, has been more than adequately dwelt upon by our newspaper scribes.

We of this department feel that a little of the publicity that greeted this phenomenon might well have been accorded to Snooks Grieser, *W.F.N.'s* satanic lift-boy, who is himself negotiating the perilous deeps of adolescence.

Snooks can now be said to be in the first flush of manhood, and a very fine flush it is. The lift has had to be enlarged to accommodate his new and ever-increasing stature, and it has been noticed that the female staff now prefer to walk the three flights of stairs to their offices. This may be due to the Keep Fit campaign, or not. We have our own ideas.

Interviewed at the Grieser home in Bethnal Green, Snooks' mother said: "We're all ever so proud of Snooks now that he's reached opalescence. Most boys seem to go through an awkward stage, but apart from a boil on the back of his neck, he's been no trouble to us at all. My husband—the rat—will probably want Snooks to do his hair differently, but you can tell your readers from me that not a single curl will be cut."

"Girl friends?" said Mrs. Grieser, in answer to our leering inquiry. "Snooks is young yet, and though he has had several young ladies in for a bowl of whelks, he has yet to meet 'Miss Right'. Romance," said Mrs. Grieser, tying up the ends of a black pudding with deft fingers, "can wait."

All those who are interested in the future of our lift-boy will, we are sure, be glad to hear Mrs. Grieser's reassuring words. We ourselves are taking a keen interest in his welfare. Only yesterday the Editor took him aside to tell him the Facts of Life, and was able to learn one or two new ones himself. Meanwhile we should like to reassure Snooks' many friends that he is still to be found in the *World Film News* lift, continuing with the career he has cut out for himself and surrounded by some rather questionable photographs which we have cut out for him.

"OH, YES, HE'S ALWAYS BEEN LIKE THAT, POOR CHAP. HIS MOTHER WAS FRIGHTENED BY AN ODEON."

# LORUM

**Rodney Hobson**

## It makes a nice change!

We of *World Film News* do not think solely and exclusively in terms of the cinema. We are fully aware of the fact that there *are* other forms of entertainment being furtively practised not a thousand miles from Wardour Street, and we take the liveliest interest in their welfare. Why, whenever we meet Sir John Reith in a passage, we are the first to stop and give him an encouraging word, remembering our own early struggles; and then, patting him benevolently on the noggin with our stout ash-stick, we pass on, intent on our own—or somebody else's—business.

You can imagine, then, how gleefully we clapped our chubby little hands together when we happened, in the columns of the *Evening Standard*, upon a startling exposure of the way some of our Front-Page Personalities behave before the microphone. Listen to this:

*Mr. Harold Nicolson, considered a master of broadcast technique, imagines that he is visiting a sick maiden aunt in a nursing home. She is not allowed to read, but likes visitors for short periods.*

*Mr. Nicolson keeps a metaphorical eye on the door, as the nurse may arrive at any moment to say that his time is up, and employs a bedside manner which is at the same time bright and informative.*

We have been privileged to see Mr. Nicolson in action at the mike and we are in a position to tell our readers more about his methods. For instance, when Mr. Nicolson's voice sounds all far away and ethereal, this is due not to emotion or to asthma, but to the fact that he has had to move over to Auntie's bedside to remove a copy of the *Paris Magazine* from her feverish fingers, or to scoop the day's accumulation of breadcrumbs from the bottom of the bed. Those dual thuds that can sometimes be heard punctuating Mr. Nicolson's broadcast talks are caused by Auntie throwing grapes at him across the studio.

All the time he is talking, Mr. Nicolson is keeping his metaphorical eye on the door for the nurse. She is of course, a purely metaphorical nurse called Mabel, who smells of iodine and is a great favourite with the boys at the Bolivar. They never tire of listening to her racy reminiscences of the sick-room and by the end of the evening many an endearing message is pencilled on her starched cuffs.

Of course, there are many other methods. Sir Samuel Hoare, we are told, always imagines he is sitting in a farmer's cottage in Norfolk, talking to the farmer and his wife. The remarks of the farmer and his wife, who wanted nothing more than a quiet evening in front of the fire, are not reproduced.

An interesting point—and one that is very little known—in connection with Sir Samuel's broadcasts, is that he strengthens the agricultural atmosphere by having Earl Baldwin walk across the studio every now and then, leading a prize bull. The studio floor is generally spread with a few inches of fertiliser and to complete the illusion, a horse-box is waiting to take him home when his talk is over.

The man whose microphone manner approaches most closely to our own, is Sir Kingsley Wood. Sir Kingsley, it seems, stands rigidly before the instrument, fixes it with a glassy eye, and addresses it as though it were a committee or board meeting. We string along with Sir Kingsley as far as the glassy eye is concerned, but we are influenced by Sir Samuel Hoare in so far as we imagine ourselves to be sitting in a farm-house with the farmer's wife, knowing that the farmer won't be back for a couple of days.

That's the kind of man we are. Nothing is sacred to us.

### MORE SAYINGS

"Those who make the Cheddar Caves and Gorge the subject of cheap wit have no sense of sanctity." —*The Mayor of Nottingham*

"I've been sued before—by experts."—*W. C. Fields.*

"When my plans are settled—which will be in about forty years—I'll announce them."—*Noel Coward.*

### MY SECRETARY'S SO DUMB SHE THINKS THAT—

A talent scout is a patrol-leader with the most badges.
The Ritz Brothers are a firm of lawyers.
Paul Rotha is a brand of champagne.
That *Elephant Boy* is about Alfred Hitchcock.
That Krampf is what people get swimming.
That Ratoff is the name of a vermicide.
That the Oxford Group is a photo of the Boat Race crew.

### Back to those Scrappy Days

A gramophone company has recently issued a catalogue of "Mood Music", published "in response to requests from producers of plays, pageants, films and any occasion that calls for a specialised musical background or interval."

The "Effects" are said to be the most promising of all. These include "Crowd Effect or Angry Mob"; "Clashing Swords and Crowd Murmurs"; "Pack of Hounds" and "Dog Fight."

It is rumoured that a number of British film-producers are clubbing together to buy these records so that, in their declining years, they may still be surrounded by the sounds so familiar to them during their careers.

**"Like to go to the movies to-night, Mabel?"**

# RADIO

## AMERICAN RADIO

### by Thomas Baird

AUTUMN brings United States listeners radio entertainment in every field—a variety of musical programmes ranging from the classical to "swing"; comedy contributed by America's leading comedians; dramatic features from Broadway and Hollywood; and full hour variety programmes including in their scope all three of the above elements.

Returning programmes include Al Jolson's show presenting Martha Raye, Eddie Cantor and his company including Deanna Durbin, and Kate Smith makes her bow in variety. Jack Oakie resumes. Jeanette MacDonald introduces a new programme. "Sunday Afternoon Silver Theatre" had its premiere performance starring Rosalind Russell, with Conrad Nagel acting as director and narrator. Barbara Stanwyck, star of the film *Stella Dallas*, re-enacted the role of the sacrificing mother when she played the leading part in a radio adaptation of the drama. Tallulah Bankhead and Henry Fonda, were co-starred in the famous *Camille*. Bankhead recently scored a radio success in the G.B.S. Shakespearean production of *Twelfth Night* as Viola. Warren William is to be heard with Gladys George and John Beal in a radio version of the famous story, *Madame X*. A new type of musical programme, to be called *Music from Hollywood*, and made up almost exclusively of melodies produced in the film centre where the pick of the nation's song writers have congregated. Scenes from *Wife, Doctor and Nurse* were played by Warner Baxter and Loretta Young, when they appeared as guest stars of *Hollywood Hotel*. Janet Gaynor was starred with Robert Montgomery in a radio adaptation of *A Star is Born* as the first of a new Autumn series of dramatic broadcasts. Sylvia Sidney, star of the motion picture *Dead End*, vivid drama of New York slum life, played in a radio version of the play on the Kate Smith Variety Hour.

Edward G. Robinson stars in a new dramatic series based on newspaper life. Robinson plays the role of a crusading managing editor of a tabloid newspaper in a large American city. Each will be a timely adaptation from the American news front, written by a battery of ace radio playwrights. The large supporting cast will be headed by Claire Trevor, prominent on stage and screen. Miss Trevor will play the part of a society editor of the paper, each episode will be complete in itself, although there will be a connecting thread running through the entire series. Fred MacMurray stars with Madge Evans in an air adaptation of the comedy success, *Up Pops the Devil*, in the broadcast produced by Cecil B. DeMille.

* * *

The forward march of one of Radio's processions of top-ranking stars is being witnessed by the listeners of the "Radio Theatre" series. The remarkable total of 132 outstanding actors and actresses of screen and stage has been presented in over 100 hour-length radio adaptations of successful vehicles of motion pictures and legitimate theatre. Four of these actors—Wallace Beery, Robert Montgomery, Herbert Marshall and Clark Gable—have made four appearances on the series. Three of the plays have had repeated performances. They are *Alias Jimmy Valentine*, *Dodsworth* and *Dulcy*.

In the list of those whom listeners have heard in three separate presentations is included Richard Barthelmess, Joan Crawford, Elissa Landi, Joe E. Brown, John Boles, Fred MacMurray, Robert Taylor, Olivia De Havilland, Gary Cooper, and Madge Evans. Twenty-four stars have been recalled for second "Radio Theatre" performances. These include Ruth Chatterton, John Beal, Jack Oakie, Frank Morgan, Edward G. Robinson, Lionel Barrymore, George N. Cohan, Sally Eilers, Irene Dunne, Fay Bainter, Marlene Dietrich, Franchot Tone,

Barbara Stanwyck, Grace Moore, Adolphe Menjou, Frances Farmer, Claudette Colbert, Jean Arthur, Errol Flynn, Fredric March, Florence Eldridge, Josephine Hutchinson, Walter Huston, and Nan Sunderland.

Artists who have appeared but once are Ethel Barrymore, Joan Bennett, William Gillette, Grace George, Eve Le Gallienne, Lawrence Tibbett, William Powell, Myrna Loy, Lily Pons, Jean Harlow, Ann Harding, Leslie Howard and many others. Prominent among the recent entertainment successes which have been adapted for the series are *Cavalcade*, *Mr. Deed Goes to Town*, *Death Takes a Holiday*, *Farewell To Arms*, *Mary of Scotland*, *The Front Page*, *Cimarron*.

Interspersed with these more modern creations have been favourites of more than one generation —*Lightning*, *Sherlock Holmes*, *Way Down East*, *Graustak*, *Brewster's Millions*, *Under Two Flags*, *The Plainsman*, *Monsieur Beaucaire*, *Beau Brummell*, *Trilby*, *The Virginian*, *Girl of the Golden West* and *Get-Rich-Quick-Wallingford*.

## *A Suggestion for B.B.C. Radio Drama*

THE B.B.C. has always set a good pace in radio drama. The drama department was doing experimental work in the new form when other countries were groping towards a beginning. *Squirrel's Cage* by Tyrone Guthrie is still one of the best radio plays of all time and it was first produced as far back as 1928. It is essentially the stuff that radio is made of. Since then radio drama as a whole has advanced. It has become more technically perfect and more subtle. There is less of life and more of art.

This is not altogether a bad thing in spite of the outpourings of the realists. It is right and proper that the drama group at the B.B.C. should on occasions take themselves to the outposts of their art in a crusading fashion and good may be done even if we do not all follow immediately into this rarefied atmosphere.

Val Gielgud's adaptation of Belloc's *Marie Antoinette*, broadcast as *Death of a Queen*, was an example of this subtler technique. It is conventionalised drama and very good drama of this kind. It is still genuinely dramatic in spite of being involved but in virtue of being involved it is difficult. Because it is difficult probably only a minority will readily like it. Again this is not wholly a fault. Minority audiences have certain rights . . . but within limits. I think the B.B.C. are observing these limits.

Much more important is the distinction, not between minority and majority, but between life and art which the B.B.C. has made explicit in having a drama department and an actuality department. Both are experimenting along diverging paths. One is getting more life on to the air and the other is becoming more and more subtle and polished and away from life.

Escape is not a bad thing . . . again in spite of realists. It is to escape that we go on holiday and I have met realists on holiday and in the most unreal of holiday places. It is to escape that we go to the theatre and anyone who goes for any other reason is up the wrong alley. It is to escape that we play darts, cricket, shove ha'penny and polo and go to see the Arsenal.

The fault with the B.B.C. drama department is that it does not lead enough of us away from life. In its subtlety and polished difficulty it does not carry the crowd. Radio is essentially a medium of mass communication. It must lead the majority up the garden with its melodrama, its pipers must pipe the millions out of their living-rooms, its variety must rock the houses of all England on a Saturday night.

Actuality is a different problem. It must still address the masses, or Radio Luxemburg will cash in, but the essential here is reporting. It is a journalists' job. They should be near the life of England reporting it dramatically. They must

# RADIO

## *Radio Drama (contd.)*

give real life an imaginative appeal but it must not become life dramatised into unreality.

It means training people to appreciate life as it is lived, training them to shake off all the glamour which the drama department should cultivate.

And here is my suggestion to the B.B.C.

All over the country there are amateur theatrical groups; in the British Drama League, the Scottish Community Drama Association and in church halls and welfare clubs. These groups perform plays, some good and some bad. In spite of their own energy and the patience of their friends who make up the audiences they are fighting a too strong opposition. You can see a film for a sixpence and you can go to a more legitimate theatre at no more cost than the amateurs are asking for admission to their shows. One can even stay at home and listen to the wireless.

In spite of this disparagement, however, there is a great tide of life in this movement and where a few bright souls have directed its energies into experiment, some notable work has been done. The B.B.C. could do a great service to these hopefuls and to themselves if they adopted some of these experimental groups. Some of them, I know, have given life to radio drama in the provinces. The Scottish National Players have been the backbone of radio drama in the Scottish region. I would like to see some of this energy being enlisted on the actuality side.

Some of these essentially local groups might well become the B.B.C.'s reporters, commentators and authors in the actuality field. Their drama could be the drama of real life—the drama of their own life. I should like it if, for example, some of the Scottish drama groups in the Islands were to forget Joe Corrie for a year and write their own account of life on their island and put it on the air with the help of the actuality department. I would like a local club in Lancashire to leave off *Quality Street* and *Pygmalion* for a year and link up with the B.B.C. to tell the story of cotton. John R. Allen's programmes from Buchan give a key to the possibilities.

The B.B.C. might go farther and link up with the drama courses in our Universities and in our Training Colleges which yearly turn out a batch of graduates and teachers enthusiastic over a type of drama which has little chance in the modern set-up. These people might instead be trained as amateur radio-producers for these local groups who are to be our regional and local interpreters.

The drama department has found its way to art: this suggestion might help the actuality department to find its way to life.

THOMAS BAIRD

# Reply to George Audit

## by D. G. Bridson of the B.B.C. Drama Department

I HAVE such a respect for the opinions of your Radio Critic, Mr. George Audit, that I am very loth to correct a slight misunderstanding that seems to have crept into his notice of an article of mine which appears in the current number of *Ariel*. But since the fault is mine no less than the article, perhaps he will allow me to make myself a bit clearer than I troubled to do in a staff magazine which I never expected him to light upon anyway!

When I made my plea for "Shockers", I was not actually making a plea for gangster plays or anything out of the usual run of programmes put out by the B.B.C. at present. So far as my intentions went, *Yes and Back Again* was just as much a shocker (i.e. a programme which "shocked" into activity emotion of one sort or another) as *The Thin Man* or *The Anatomist*. All that my plea boiled down to was a simple wish that radio dramatists would construct their plays in such a way that they seized hold of some emotion or other of the listener, and *exploited* it. An unexpected gag, which jumps out on the listener's sense of humour and makes him laugh when he least expects to do so, is a " shock" (in the sense I meant for the word), just as genuine as the sudden firing of a gun behind the listener's chair.

A "shocker" then, is just one sort of a programme which gets hold of the listener's emotions in a particular way. That way is one which I have used in various of my shows. I used it, for instance, in *The March of the* '45—where some of the effects which Mr. Audit has actually praised, were obtained by various little technical tricks which drew his emotions up one back alley and suddenly jerked them into another. The same tricks were also used in my programme *Steel*.

But while the example of *Steel* may have been a bad one to cite in defence of the theory, I think the theory is sound enough for all that. As I say, I could have explained it by examples drawn from far more successful programmes, either of mine or of anyone else's. But before dropping the subject, I should just like to put in a plea for the class of programme which *Steel* was intended to originate. Mr. Audit complains that I padded it out with verse, and also complains that verse is unsuitable for a programme on a steel foundry. I would not, he says, use verse in a Harry Hopeful programme—therefore, why use it for a programme which treated of similar raw material? The answer is that I should be just as ready to use verse in a programme descriptive or evocative of one of the districts covered by Harry Hopeful as I would be to do a Harry Hopeful show from a Steel Works the week after a verse show.

*Steel*, in fact, never *was* an actuality show, or ever pretended to be. It was a documentary show conceived on a musical basis, and described as an "industrial symphony". And if it was a bad symphony, I can only protest that somebody else might nevertheless be able to write a good one—even using the same themes. Perhaps the most satisfying "response" which I have had to the show came from one of our documentary film producers. It left him, he said, with a violent desire to make a documentary film in a Steel Works, to which it could run as a sound track. The emotional effect for which I had been playing, he felt, could have been obtained more decisively if the eye had at the same time been *seeing* what I was writing about. If the visual image would not always have been the same as the spoken image (it *frequently* wouldn't have been) the effect would actually have been heightened by the clash—as was the case in Pudovkin's film *The Deserter*, where sound and visual tracks were purposely set at odds here and there.

That, as a matter of fact, was what I was hoping to hear about the programme. I was taking it for granted that the listener had before his mind's eye the pictures on which I was building by analogy—and obviously not many of them possibly could have had. Now to expect something like that is tantamount to saying that one is in experimental mood—and *Steel* was confessedly an experiment (whereas Harry Hopeful, God rest his boots, most certainly ain't). And if the experiment failed, as I said before, I hope Mr. Audit won't condemn me for having made it, or will condemn the theory behind it for the sake of a bad example. Sooner or later, I have a feeling, someone is going to write a whale of a good programme along exactly the same lines. And if I can't claim to have rung the bell myself, I can at least claim to have hung it up and handed on the hammer.

**George Audit writes:—**

*Mr. Bridson gave the bell such a mighty clap with "The March of the '45" that many of us still carry its sound in our ears. That was a "shocker", if you like. Until radiodrama makes its plays out of the tough problems of war and peace, labour and unemployment, hunger and the home, or uses plays like those of Isben, Shaw, O'Neill, Gorki, and others that do, we shall not be "shocked" by it. I only wish to say to Mr. Bridson that such material cannot be presented in the manner of "Steel." "Steel," apart from the unsuitability of much of the verse (good though it may be in itself) failed because it concentrated attention on, almost defying, the Steel production process, instead of the human beings who created and operated. In so doing, he was compelled to use poetic description of his abstract subject. He says himself he expected his listeners to have seen a foundry. My criticism, last month, was precisely that because listeners cannot see the subject, the radio producer must go out of his way to suggest its actuality and presence by indirect means. In "Steel", a workman's description in plain English would often have been more effective than a storm of verse and music. Mr. Bridson wants another programme on the same lines. If he fails with "Steel", nobody can succeed. Won't he try again?*

# THEATRE

## THE HABIMA PLAYERS

This famous company is of particular interest to the makers of films. While playing in Yiddish in Russia and now in Hebrew throughout Europe, they are compelled to adopt a mimetic method which will explain what the strangeness of their language prevents them from doing. This, perhaps, is what some makers of films in this country may find it necessary to do for audiences abroad when they wish to avoid 'dubbing' and sub-titles. The Habima Players have transformed this compulsion into an artistic virtue. The expressiveness of gesture, the vividness of colour, the grouping of the crowds, the character in their most insignificant member, combine to make *The Dybbuk* a theatrical experience, whether or not one has knowledge of Hebrew. The plot is based on the Ghetto superstition that an unhappy spirit could inhabit the body of a living person. The dead Hanan lives on in the frame of his beloved Leah, so that she is only sometimes herself and at others speaks with his voice, is dominated by his soul. The play tells how the spirit is exorcised but only at the expense of the death of Leah, exhausted in breaking through the spells dividing her from her lover.

The story is not important. What is important is the superb dramatic quality of pace, change of mood, grouping, colour, which make the second act, wherein Leah is to marry someone she does not love, and dances with halt and blind beggars.

## IBSEN'S GHOSTS

Is Ibsen dead? When I spoke of him to one of the Habima players, he said that Ibsen had no appeal for him, because his language lacked poetry—an argument used by Synge. But go to the Vaudeville and see if his grip has relaxed in *Ghosts*. In these days of abstract drama, it is good to turn to Ibsen and see how he can present an abstract problem in terms of a concrete problem, how his poetry owes its lyricism and its austerity to having its roots in our normal everyday world. It is to be noted that he does not specify what disease Alving transmitted to his son. We have been too apt to assume that *Ghosts* is an attempt to show up the evils of venereal disease. It may do so incidentally, but its main object is to show that a train of evil cannot be stopped by ignoring it nor by pious sentiments. "The sins of the fathers are visited on the children", and Mrs. Alving sees and hears in Oswald making love to his half-sister Regina the ghosts of his father and her mother—the same evils perpetuated through fear of facing and telling the truth. Symbolically, that shrewd business man, Pastor Manders, insures all Mrs. Alving's material property but not the orphanage—not so much because God himself might be offended by this lack of trust in his benevolent watchfulness, as because religious-minded men of influence might be so offended. And the orphanage is burned down, at the moment when Regina and Oswald learn their true relationship of half-brother and sister, and learn how the respected Mrs. Alving has destroyed their futures in the same way as the orphanage is even then being destroyed by the carelessness of such as Pastor Manders whose business it was to take every care for its protection. "The sins of the fathers are visited on the children." The ghosts of the old sins live on. The suppression of truth for the sake of a false convention, the restriction of the fine vital energy of Mr. Alving into squalid adventures, results in evil. The truth of human nature must be faced, said Ibsen, or evil results, and it will not be stopped by turning the eyes worshippingly up to Heaven.

Mrs. Alving, who has recognised that Ibsenite truth through her experiences with her husband, is willing that Oswald should marry Regina, despite their close blood relationship, rather than that he should be thwarted and driven into vice like his father. But Regina is too full of her father's joy in life, and she flounces out of the house to fulfil that joy rather than nurse the invalid Oswald, whether as lover or as sister. In Regina survives the healthy vital side of her father. In Oswald survives the diseased consequences of the frustration of that vitality. So Regina goes to life, and Oswald waits for death in that terrible ending of the play with the mother poisoning her son through love and desire to protect him from suffering.

Miss Marie Ney's Mrs. Alving was an intense and beautifully controlled characterisation—pale-faced, worn, educated and exhausted by experience. Her scenes with Mr. Stephen Murray as the haggard, well-meaning, foolish Pastor Manders were duets, perfectly timed and blended. Her final scene with Oswald was beautifully done by her, although I personally did not find the mewing note in her weeping moving. Mr. Clifford Evans as Oswald was out of key with the other actors. He played the part too much on his nerves, with some melodramatic tricks of voice and gesture. The Regina of Miss Silvia Coleridge was a pretty little minx with a calculating brain.

## SHAKESPEARE by G.B.S.

The main interest to most people in the production of *Cymbeline* at the Embassy will be the revision of the last act by Mr. Shaw. The play is certainly dull, a third-rate *Romeo and Juliet* and, although action is quickened by playing it on one set and before a drop curtain, Mr. van Gyseghem will probably be able to get swifter production than was evident at the dress rehearsal.

Why should *Cymbeline* be revised? *Cymbeline* says Mr. Shaw, "though one of the finest of Shakespeare's later plays, always on the stage goes to pieces in the last act, which is a tedious string of unsurprising denouéments sugared with insincere sentimentality after a ludicrous stage battle, a masque very incongruously interpolated because masques were fashionable under King Jamie, and a silly Mother Shipton prophecy." Mr. Shaw has aimed, not at re-writing Shakespeare, but at candidly Shavian variations on the Shakespearean theme in the same way as, to quote Mr. Shaw's own example, Beethoven's variations on Diabelli's "vulgar little waltz" were candidly his own.

The result is very amusing—as though *Man and Superman* had been grafted on *Romeo*. The sons restored to their father, King Cymbeline, inform him that they are too old now to experience any thrill at finding a father. When offered the throne, they reject it with horror, commenting on the cage in which a king lives, and which prevents him even from marrying the woman he loves.

Imogen becomes Ann Whitehead, and Posthumous, not John Tanner, but representative of the crass brutal male from which woman has to suffer so much. Imogen cites the thoroughly dirty trick which Posthumous has played on her as but an example of what happens when man holds the dominating position. It would not have been surprising if she had held out for equal pay for equal work. The Shakespearean complications are given short shrift. "Are there any more plots to unravel?" demands Cymbeline. Most Shavian touch of all, when Iachimo, who has exchanged his Shakespearean villainy for some of Mr. Shaw's benign cyncisim, wittily pleads with Imogen for Posthumous's sake, she says: "I refuse to laugh. Laughter destroys anger, and prevents murder."

Mr. André van Gysheghem has accelerated action by the use of one set (a staircase on either side of a central arch with a platform on top of it), alternately with action before the drop curtain.

## MOURNING BECOMES ELECTRA

In *Mourning Becomes Electra* at the Westminster, the Ancient Greek tragedy is re-enacted in an American household of the last century, with the Greek emphasis on the omnipotence of Fate confirmed and amplified by the modern insight into the forces of the sub-conscious which are stronger than reason, stronger than will, stronger than justice. Electra is Lavinia Mannon and Orestes is her brother Orin whom she spurs to kill Aegisthus in the person of Captain Adam Brant, lover of her mother Christine and poisoner by the latter's persuasion of Brigadier-General Ezra Mannon, Christine's husband and Lavinia's father. The settings confirm the classical allusion of the title. The Mannon house has before it a temple portico which, to quote Eugene O'Neill's stage direction, "is like an incongruous grey mask fixed on the house to hide its sombre grey ugliness."

In its profundity and scope, its concern with the soul, its ability to transmute what might be mere melodrama into metaphysical grandeur, this play may be called Shakespearean. Beside Miss Beatrix Lehmann's magnificent, relentless performance as Lavinia, Mr. Robert Harris's playing of Orin, with the madness never over-stressed but always there, and Miss Laura Cowie's Christine are to be mentioned, and a tribute paid to the cast and to Mr. Michael MacOwen's production of this fine play. Although it begins at 6.30, there are intervals. But, even if there were not, the play would compensate for your suppers.

**HENRY ADLER**

# NEWSREEL NOTES BY THE COMMENTATOR

### Voice Staffs

If ever there is formed a trade union of radio and newsreel commentators, it will boast the world's most widely assorted band of members. For commentating as a career is still so new that none of the men and women who now spend most of their days and many of their nights as the eyes and ears of the rest of the world, have been at it all their lives. They have graduated to the microphone from every conceivable occupation, bound only by one common qualification: that a benign Providence has given them the right shape of vocal organs.

### Fan Voices

In the last few years, as newsreels have speeded up their presentation, the importance of the commentator has grown in step. Where once "the picture told the story", eventually it became the commentator "telling" and the picture "illustrating" the most photogenic incidents. Then America discovered that even a disembodied voice could express so much of the personality of its owner, as to build up a "fan" interest. Radio started the era of the plugged commentator. Soon the newsreels followed, and "big name" voices moved into the big money class.

### America's Star Commentators

To-day almost all America's biggest microphone names are free-lance. They tie themselves to a certain series of commercially sponsored radio programmes; but are free to work directly for the broadcasting companies for sport and news relays, and to "strip talk" regularly for one or other of the newsreels. Commentator of the U.S. Movietonews is Lowell Thomas, who also does a regular radio news editorial, came to London to broadcast the coronation to the U.S. America's Pathé News uses Clem McCarthy, white haired, middle-aged "Dean" of radio sports commentators. British listeners heard some of his remarks at the end of the relay of the Farr-Louis fight. On the M.G.M. reel "News of the Day," the voice is that of Jean Paul King, and on the U.S. Universal, Graham McNamee, both featured commentators of the National Broadcasting Company. Thus all American reels treat the voice as among their biggest selling features—with one great exception.

### Nameless Policy

From the first recorded word on its sound tracks, Paramount News has held rigidly to the policy of complete anonymity for its commentators. That policy is practised with equal fervour by British Paramount. On both sides of the Atlantic the company has been at pains, not so much to shroud its voices in mystery, but to deny the importance of their work. To say, in effect: "commentators exist only to pad out the weak spots in our pictures—almost anyone can do that—so why worry about identification!" In Britain, Paramount are not alone in hiding their vocal identity; but in the U.S. they faced a unanimous blast of publicity trumpets from the commentators of their rival reels. The blast was too hard, it blew Paramount over.

### Nameless Policy Reversed

Last month, to celebrate its tenth anniversary, America's Paramount News announced the formation of what it grandly calls a "Voice Staff." "Chief of Staff" (i.e. Head Commentator) is Gabriel Heatter; under him are eight others. Thus with nine voices Paramount sets up a record: for even multivoiced Movietone has never employed more than seven. Meanwhile British Paramount continues mum about the names of its two commentators, and Editor Cummins "won't talk" about the possibility of the U.S. reversal of policy being reflected in Britain. But it is a well-known Wardour Street fact that the American parent company keeps a pretty tight hold on its British branch; so British Paramount's two mystery voices may yet find their names in the headlines.

### Mixed Lot

With other British reels there have been no commentating changes for at least three years. Most famous of Britain's voices is E. V. H. Emmett of the Gaumont-British News. His style is a rather dull monotone, livened by a natural wit that must be almost unique, and puts him in the world class as a laugh raiser. Emmett trained for the stock exchange, joined the G.B. News in the silent days as a cutter, was sent out on one of the earliest sound stories "just to point out the important items" via the microphone. No one was more amazed than he at the bubble of mirth that greeted the first hearing of those casual remarks. Emmett has never looked back. He enjoys one enormous advantage over his rivals, in that he controls the cutting of all G.B. stories. So picture, and commentary always match to a fraction of an inch; the secret of his invariably perfect comedy timing.

### Uncle Jeff

Universal Talking News features R. E. Jeffry, plugging his name on the Main Title in true American style. Jeffry was a pioneer with the old British Broadcasting Co., Uncle Jeff of the Children's Hour. To-day he is still Uncle Jeff to thousands of newsreel fans, who worry less about the news, sit back to enjoy homely chit-chat in Jeffry's slow, heavily emphasised, fireside manner. For the last three years, Pathé Gazette has used ex-B.B.C. announcer Roy de Groot, who, at 20 joined the B.B.C., and became in turn studio announcer, outside broadcast commentator, programme producer. With a rolling bass, de Groot is best at drama and tragedy, he put so much feeling into his description of the King George V funeral, that Pathé News of America put out the British version with his voice, in cinemas from coast to coast.

### Fifteen Million a Week

Following the practice of their American counterpart, Movietonews employs a staff of commentators, headed by speed-king Sir Malcolm Campbell, who, however, makes only rare appearances. Other Movietone voices: Eric Dunstan, ex-B.B.C. announcer, smart clubman, journalist; Leslie Mitchell, ex-actor, whose main job is B.B.C. television announcer; Ivan Scott, former musical-comedy juvenile lead, also Movietone News Editor; Alan Howland; Beryl de Querton, Britain's only regular commentatrice. Each of these "voices of Britain" is heard by an average of about fifteen million cinemagoers each week.

**GORDON HALES,** age 21½, of average appearance but extremely intelligent, hard-working and reliable, urgently desires employment in any branch of film production, but preferably as a cutter's assistant. Will work for any wage, however small, all hours, anywhere. Practical experience limited mainly to 16mm. stock, but considerable theoretical knowledge. Capable of working for exceptionally long hours without sleep or food. Failing studio work would undertake work in renting or exhibiting line, in fact any work connected with the cinema. Write:—36 Constable Road, Ipswich.

# BOOK REVIEWS

### *Movies for the Millions*

By Gilbert Seldes (Batsford, 7*s.* 6*d.*)

Like the other arts movie has its different levels of appreciation. But the fact is already emerging that despite its youth movie has its different generations of appreciators. There are those (now elderly and venerable) who speak of the works of Méliès, viewed contemporaneously, with the hushed voices of those who have known a great brandy. There are those (less venerable but almost as elderly) who consider Biograph 1908 as a movie vintage never to be surpassed. Many there are—and they can still get about without crutches—who regard the coming of sound as a veritable scourge of phylloxera, destroying the vineyards and precluding further interest in the product thereof. And growing up in the midst of this world of didactic connoisseurs is a new generation of movie-lovers who have never tasted other than the mild-and-bitter of modern Hollywood.

Appreciators of all generations will find this book to their liking. Even the most narrow-minded of the connoisseurs will be unable to take offence at the skilful way in which their own pet periods are related to the wider development of the cinema; while the enquiring tyro will find in it an account of the causes and effects of many matters hitherto mysterious. Even the odd two million English people who have rejected the cinema and all its works would discover in it a piece of dispassionate good thinking conducive to a more benevolent attitude and a fresh trial.

A good understanding of any subject is rare, and the cinema is the last exception. Its violent economic instability, its spasmodic and disjointed relations with social reality, make it an almost impossible field for the comprehensive analyst. Academic treatises we have had in plenty; emotive responses have been measured, technical resources catalogued, aesthetic potentialities discussed. At the other end of the scale the unhinged utterances of sentimentalists, nymphomaniacs and moral obstructionists have raised a clamour out of all proportion to their importance. And in any film analysis a miss is as good as a mile for the simple reason that during the process of recording and synthesis the movies have moved on another stage. The film anatomist has to operate not on a corpse conveniently stuffed with red lead, but on a vital, living entity. He must carry the normal equipment of the social and economic observer; he must be something of a mental athlete, perpetually thinking ahead of what he sees; above all, he must, in a world of overnight values, be content to suspend judgment. Mr. Seldes has sifted the writings of the academes and the unhinged; he has observed the people of the screen with the care of an anthropologist, seasoning his observation with a practical spell of movie-making in Hollywood. And he has suspended judgment (at least so far as this book is concerned) for over twenty years. In addition he has collected 130 stills which in themselves form a unique and startling history of the movies. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that his book is the most penetrative study of the cinema published in recent years.

Mr. Seldes is good company not only because he is an authoritative and entertaining writer, but also because he is tolerant and wise. The movies could scarcely ask for a more gracious critic. He hints at the dirt rather than spills it. It is true that in his more anecdotal moments he gives glimpses of the uglinesses behind. The story of the striker being deliberately tear-gassed for the benefit of a news cameraman (substantiated before a committee of the U.S. Senate) is an interesting reflection on the integrity of American newsreels. But the overall flavour of the book is one of excitement. Twenty years' service as a leading critic of commercial movies has failed to discourage Mr. Seldes. He looks forward to colour and stereoscopy and television as excitedly as he looks back to Méliès and Griffith. His excitement infects his readers, and therein lies his special charm.

STUART LEGG

### *Sound Recording for Films*

By W. F. Elliott (Pitman, 10*s.* 6*d.*)

When the documentary people got their first experiences of sound they were inclined to regard the new element as a mixed blessing. The creative thrill which sound brought was, in those early days, to some extent countered by the immense difficulty of actually recording it. Limitations began to appear in a hitherto limitless world of shooting. Interior locations had to be chosen for their acoustic qualities. Cameras, once light and mobile, had to be encased in clumsy, home-made blimps or draped with blankets and padded with old bedroom-slippers. The microphone dominated the set, and the sounds of the working world had to be hushed for its benefit. Over all presided the recordist, enthroned in a remote Valhalla of meters, valves and mixing-panels. His word was law and he legislated through a telephone, icily. His calm pronunciamentos could drive a harassed director to blasphemy and an outraged cameraman to the nearest pub.

But all that has been changed. Sound-recordists have become friendly human beings. Some have examined the special aims and requirements of documentary and, finding interest therein, have themselves become specialised in catering for this branch of the business. One of these is W. F. Elliott, author of *Sound Recording for Films*.

Now in charge of the production recording department of British Acoustic Films, Mr. Elliott came to films from the world of radio. Much of his experience was gained in dubbing foreign languages on to films of American origin. This work took him to Spain, India and other countries. His book is accordingly written from the standpoint of the practitioner. Academic niceties he leaves to others; his focal point is the loudspeaker behind the screen, and he rightly regards sound-photography, production technique and re-recording methods as contributory stages towards good or bad results. In the course of this practical approach he performs useful service in resolving technical bugbears into their simplest terms, debunking the mystery-men and making concrete suggestions for improvements in working.

In a book of relatively high price we might reasonably ask for more—particularly for some report of present experiments and their likely effect on future sound possibilities. An account, for example, of the recent American radio experiments in the use of narrow-angle microphones for the recording of orchestras would have been of deep interest to film musicians. But to insist would be ungrateful, for Mr. Elliott has done a good and necessary job of exposition, and though he primarily addresses apprentices to his own calling he will also be welcomed in that growing circle of people interested in the manner and method of film-making.

### *Cinemania*

By A. G. Bennett (Jarrolds, 18*s.*)

Mr. Arthur Gordon Bennett in *Cinemania* has written a book of some 430 pages in which he gives us his personal opinions on every conceivable part of films: film production, film distribution, and film exhibition; film stars, film directors, film critics; films past, and films future. It is difficult to find in this very long book any subject connected with the cinema on which the author does not pronounce some opinion and, unfortunately, it is equally difficult to find any subject which he deals with thoroughly or competently.

Mr. Bennett's own explanation of his reason for writing this book will perhaps serve better than any comment of ours to give an idea of its character. "I am a novelist by profession. By instinct and inclination I am a showman." He would like to go into movie production because he tells us his career up to date seems to have demonstrated that he possesses, as a writer, certain qualifications that render his work "suitable for the filmic medium"; because he can claim "some knowledge of acting" and because he believes "the film to be the greatest art in the world."

Not being in a position to make films, Mr. Bennett has written this book. He ought to go into films.

### *Scruffy*

By Claude Burbidge (Hurst and Blackett, 5*s.*)

*Scruffy*, an autobiography of the English dog film star who appeared in *Storm In a Teacup*, is something of a disappointment. For the first sixty-eight pages it is delightful and belongs to Scruffy, but after that he is pushed somewhat into the background.

I strongly suspect that Scruffy did not write this book himself but employed what turned out to be an unethical "ghost" who gives vent to personal criticisms, and poor Scruffy becomes little more than a peg on which to hang the author's likes and dislikes. Most of which are of no particular interest to the reader who expected a story of a dog.

Taken all in all, *Scruffy* is a very readable book and the mongrel is a likeable little cuss. But it could have been far more entertaining had it been more of a dog's-eye view and less of the author's plugging for several of Denham's other film stars.

G. F.

# BOOK REVIEWS

### *Caustic Carols*

By Rodney Hobson. Illustrated by Clarke Hutton (Chatto and Windus, 3*s.* 6*d.*)

If, like myself, you open *World Film News* at the Cockalorum page, you may feel that there is no need to buy the Collected Works of Hobson, when you can so easily re-enter into his joy by opening your well-thumbed bound volumes. But this would be a mistake. *Caustic Carols* is full of new stuff, and is worth the whole three and sixpence for the "Folk Song 1937" alone:

"O the old Rose and Crown has gone down-derry-down
Since they Londoners came down from town;
They say to each other, 'Oh darling, how quaint'
But it baint half as quaint as they be, that it baint."

Hobson derives his style from several genres. The music-hall song would appear to be one of his first loves; but also the works of W. S. Gilbert, are, one suspects, not unknown to him; and America's great contribution to the world of humour has been absorbed by his voracious inkpot.

He is, however, a law unto himself, and injects his own originality into every medium he chooses. Quite apart from his miraculous ingenuity in rhyming (Christmuth – bismuth, how far – enquah, nudities – rude it is – either you like 'em or you don't) he can be kindly satirical or unkindly cynical at will. His remarks on Herbert Marshall fall joyously into the latter category; readers of *W.F.N.* will remember that

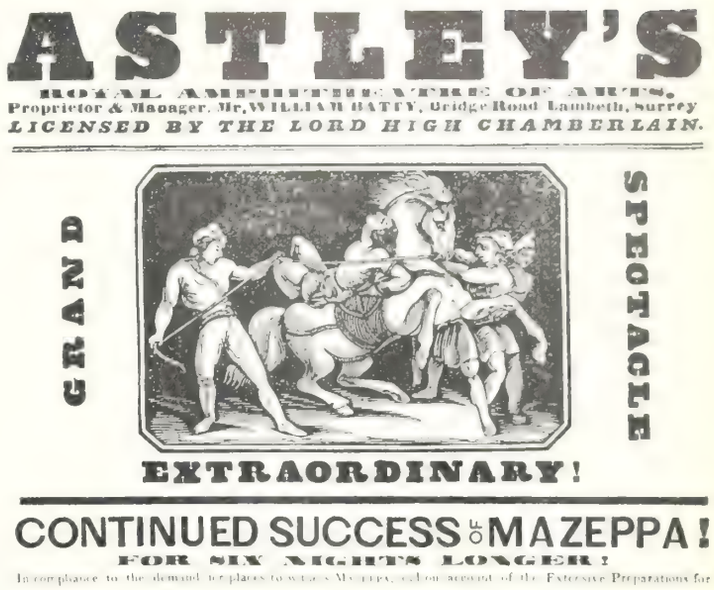
"He's always walking out into a blizzard if he can
Leaving the little woman to the other man.
Which, for the little woman, may be wizard,
But is it quite fair to the blizzard."

The illustrations by Clarke Hutton are poised nicely between the style of Thurber and Topolski; but when it comes to brass tacks its Hobson's energetic wit that counts.

A first class Xmas Gifte Booke for anyone—but especially film people, who may enliven the Yule festivities (yule rhymes with winter fule, of course) by recitations of "O, Mae is going West lads" or "Gertie the girl in the thrillers".

BASIL WRIGHT

From *Caustic Carols*, published by Chatto and Windus




From *The Greatest Show on Earth*, published by G. Bell & Sons

ONCE upon a time, the theatre was the greatest show on earth. Shakespeare wrote for the common people and indeed the uncommon people. Governors, ecclesiastics and the rest frowned on the theatre. Sometimes it was persecuted, its players called vagabonds and put in prison. But the theatre was in touch with the common people. Plays were presented at inns, on village greens and commons. Every city had its players.

This happy state did not survive very long. The nobility took up the stage. Expensive theatres were built and a stage presentation became so costly as to be only within reach of a few. The theatre became divorced from the people. It only came in touch with them again, briefly, in the Victorian era with its travelling companies, its melodramas and its thrillers.

But the common people did not allow themselves to be deprived of entertainment. When the nobility stole the theatre away from them the circus took its place. Indeed, it is not unreasonable to say that the circus, which in Victorian times had its focus in Astley's, filled the place of the picture-palace of to-day. For the circus, like the film, has the common touch.

Willson Disher has written the history of Astley's, the great circus just south of London Bridge. He has caught the garishness and the simplicity of the time. His book is to be read not only by the student of the circus (who will find it admirably documented) but by anyone who has a feeling for the cheeriness of the people. His book has a real cockney flavour and its illustrations are splendid. The quotations are well chosen, apt, amusing and not too long.

It is said that people go to the pictures to escape reality. The films present us with a semblance of the real world but detached from the laws that govern society. Just a paradise of everything good and nothing bad, with a few gangsters to give excitement. Astley's was a dope for the people, too, but Astley's gave a real escape from life. Its performances had no relation with this earth, with their prancing horses, tumblers, clowns.

Listen to a contemporary description of Astley's most famous play:

"Andrew Ducrow's *Mazeppa and the Wild Horse, or The Child of the Desert*, was launched on a universally triumphant career of half a century on April 4th, 1831.

"In the courtyard of the Castle of Laurinski, as dawn is extinguishing the lights in the windows, Cassimir, a Tartar who serves as a page, climbs a buttress to kiss the hand of Olinska, the Castellan's daughter, who enters on a balcony. But when he pleads with her to fly to the deserts of Tartary, she answers, 'How, with barbarians? sworn foes of my country—never, never!' Meanwhile, at the head of a splendid cavalcade of knights, Premislas, Count Palatine, comes to wed Olinska. In his honour a tournament is held: 'first a small sword combat, between two of the Pages—then a tilt of mounted and armed Knights, with spear and battle-axe, of whom Cassimir is one—then a sword combat on horseback, between Cassimir and his opponent—in both of these Cassimir is successful—then a broad-sword combat of four, in which Cassimir is also the victor.' That night the Tartar challenges Premislas to a duel and wounds him, but is secured by servants and sentenced by the Castellan to the punishment inflicted on rebel slaves:

'Lead the vile Tartar hence—strip him of the garb he has degraded—let not the arms of my house be sullied by adorning a traitor who raises his assassin arm against my friend, under the very roof that gives him shelter. Lead out the fiery, untamed steed—prepare strong hempen lashings round the villain's loins—let every beacon-fire on the mountain's top be lighted, and torches like a blazing forest cast their glare across the night.'"

The cinema has much to learn from the circus and the music-hall.

Circuses and music-halls survive, while the theatre, divorced from the people, suffocates in the fat embrace of prosperous city men. Everyone who is interested in the flavour of the nineteenth century, everyone who is interested in popular entertainment, everyone who likes a readable, informative and finely illustrated book, should read Willson Disher's *Greatest Show on Earth.*

ARTHUR ELTON

*"The Greatest Show on Earth" is published by Messrs. G. Bell & Sons. at* 15/-.

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# CARTOONS
# NEWS

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A STRAND FILM

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★

*Managing Director*
DONALD TAYLOR

★

# *The Future's in the Air*

Directed by ALEXANDER SHAW

★

A brilliant advertisement of both the excitements and the security of flying. *The Times.*

There is infinite variety in the film, food for the mind of the technical and likewise for the lover of travel and beauty. *The Manchester Guardian.*

Should be shown in schools throughout the country. *The Daily Sketch.*

It has been brilliantly treated, for there is never a dull moment in the course of the film's rapid development. *To-Day's Cinema.*

STRAND FILM COMPANY LTD., 37/39 OXFORD STREET, W.1

# I SHOT Romance in LOW LIFE

## by Percy Smith

THESE remarks are respectfully offered to those who have expressed interest during the past three years in the filming of Paramecium, particularly those responsible for the following questions:

What *is* Paramecium?

What *are* Paramecium?

Is it true that you put fifty on the head of a pin?

Of what use is Paramecium?

Have you tried any of those things they use for breeding dogs?

What's wrong with your drains?

Haven't you got it yet?

Paramecium is a tiny slipper-shaped animal, barely visible to the eye which is found in smelly ponds and feeds on bacteria. To those who live in the atmosphere of microscopes and to whom size counts for nothing this tiny living speck is of immense interest ; so it was decided to confer upon it the dignity and importance of a film-star. Specimens were obtained from various ponds and fed in jars of water containing putrefying wheat. As the joy of the inmates seemed directly proportional to the objectionableness of the stink produced this was patiently tolerated with a proviso that a prompt shooting of the specimens would be all to the good. Within a year every phase of its life history had been duly photographed with one exception—marriage—and that of course was what everyone was most anxious to see.

Paramecium breeds at an incredible rate, and appears to have the choice of two methods. The more usual mode of procedure is to grow a more and more pronounced waist, finally splitting by a muscular effort into two hefty youngsters. The other method is more complicated. A passing couple turn back and swim round each other with every appearance of mutual attraction. Then follows a kissing phase and finally they press their mouths together so firmly as to become inseparably united. Each individual next develops the attribute of both father and mother and a mutual exchange of compliments takes place; so whatever amusement is derived from the business is on a fifty-fifty basis. It seems incredible that a creature with such capabilities for love-making could willingly descend to the sordid and prosaic alternative of pulling itself in half. Be this as it may the fact remains that a badly-wanted film was held up by a wretched creature that didn't want a good time and was obstinately determined not to have one. During a whole year frantic efforts were made to bring about the desired result. Experts were approached for advice and much of it being thoroughly contradictory, quite a lot of time was frittered away in experiments which led nowhere.

The first idea was that a culture weakened by continual in-breeding would marry to restore its lost vitality. We got a single Paramecium and bred from it for months until its projeny numbered millions of millions, and just as we were getting tired of this super-in-breeding we were told that it was all wrong and that we needed two such communities bred from different strains and finally mixed. So we got a Paramecium from Manchester and one from Camden Town and one from Epping Forest and one from a host of other places, from Universities, from dealers and from smelly ponds: and we in-bred them all *ad nauseam* and mixed them all *ad infinitum*. In the end we had an appalling assemblage of Paramecium in a room-full of glass-ware of sorts: but they didn't marry.

Then we were told to over-feed them. They merely bred the more and smelt the worse. Next we were told to starve them. The result was most gratifying as we lost three quarters of our guests in a week and so reduced the collection to more practicable dimensions. One might mention that the production of endless cultures was really the simplest part of the business. Each of the glasses had to be taken at frequent intervals into a bright light and its seething millions thoroughly inspected with a pocket lens, in case amongst the obstinate horde a single pair had so far forgotten themselves as to do what we wanted. Literature from many sources was roped in and carefully studied. This marriage business—known in the text-books as conjugation—was frequently dealt with in such a way as to suggest that, with a mass of material such as we possessed, it would be an everyday occurrence. One felt that it was a far, far easier thing to describe the elusive event on paper than to produce it in the flesh.

Biological experts here and there who had actually witnessed the incident, and pond-life enthusiasts who hoped to were all on the look-out on our behalf, but a year went by and nothing came along.

HAVING vainly exploited all outside suggestions we decided to try out a few possibilities in the way of stimulants. Beef extract was fed to old cultures weakened by endless in-breeding, and these were promptly rejuvenated: but they only went on splitting. Someone suggested beer. The only noticeable result was a stimulation of what nature has given Paramecium in the way of kidneys.

Then we thought of the apple. This was not in any way suggested by the historic incident in the Garden of Eden, but by experiments with ferns.

On the basis of sex-appeal a fern might be considered distinctly cold and unresponsive, but it actually has a romantic phase in its history and at that period the male department can be worked up into quite a frenzy by the administration of a spot of apple-juice.

The effect of a piece of apple on Paramecium was instantaneous. They were attracted in millions and packed themselves on it in thick layers—but there was nothing sexy about it. They merely had a partiality for acid: and they continued to split and split.

At last! One evening came a message from the Imperial College. A student had spotted the long-sought event. A hectic rush, lights blazing and cameras buzzing far into the night: by the morning Paramecium was unconcernedly pretending that nothing of the sort had ever happened: but the film showed otherwise—and film never lies.

# FILM GUIDE

## *Shorts*

**Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves** (Puppets in Gaspar-colour).

*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.

*PRODUCTION:* Slatinay and George Pal.

| | |
|---|---|
| BOLTON: Gem | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| BRISTOL: Premier | Dec. 27, 3 days |
| Olympia | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| BIRMINGHAM: Broadway, Bristol St. | Dec. 19, 1 day |
| BURNHAM-ON-SEA: Ritz | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| CLEATOR MOOR: Hippodrome | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| FISHBURN: Alhambra | Dec. 8, 2 days |
| KIPPAX: Alhambra | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| KEITH: Playhouse | Dec. 20, 3 days |
| LONDON: Hippodrome, Charing X Rd. | Dec. 5, 1 day |
| LAUNCESTON: Tower | Dec. 27, 3 days |
| LYNEMOUTH: Miners | Dec. 27, 3 days |
| LONG EATON: Empire | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| MIDSOMER NORTON: Palladium | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| NORTHAMPTON: Plaza | Dec. 27, 3 days |
| ROSS ON WYE: Kyrle | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| ST. ANNES: Empire | Dec. 19, 1 day |
| SACRISTON: Memorial | Dec. 19, 1 day |
| SHERBURN: Unity | Dec. 10, 2 days |
| STONE: Picture House | Dec. 27, 3 days |
| THATTO HEATH: Empire | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| WIGTON: Palace | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| WALTON ON THAMES: Capitol | Dec. 20, 6 days |

**Coal Face** (Poetic treatment of coal mining).

*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.

*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit.

*SOUND PRODUCTION:* Alberto Cavalcanti.

| | |
|---|---|
| LAINDON: Picture House | Dec. 23, 3 days |


**WE ALWAYS THOUGHT WE WERE GOOD**

Once again Imperial heads the list of recordings for the month. 22 shorts are shown on these pages and we recorded 16 of them.

1 *is a foreign recording,*
5 *were recorded by other British studios, and*
***16 were recorded by Imperial.***

Which shows that Imperial alone recorded 4 times as many shorts as all other British studios put together.

**NOW WE KNOW WE ARE GOOD**

**Imperial Sound Studios**
84 WARDOUR STREET . GER 1963
"where everyone goes for recording"


**Colourful Cairo** (Travelogue).

*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.

| | |
|---|---|
| ALEXANDRA: Strand | Dec. 23, 3 days |
| NEWSHAM: Plaza | Dec. 10, 2 days |
| WHITECHAPEL: Rivoli | Dec. 5, 1 day |

**Cover to Cover** (Documentary of book production).

*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.

*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films.

*DIRECTION:* Alexander Shaw.

| | |
|---|---|
| COCKERMOUTH: Grand | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| CHORLTON-CUM-HARDY: Palais de Luxe | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| FISHBURN: Alhambra | Dec. 8, 2 days |
| HAVANT: Empire | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| KING'S LYNN: Majestic | Dec. 23, 3 days |
| LEEDS: Cosy | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| NEWSHAM: Plaza | Dec. 24, 2 days |
| NORTHENDEN: Coronation | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| OLDHAM: Kings | Dec. 27, 6 days |
| REDCAR: Central | Dec. 20, 3 days |
| SHERBURN HILL: Unity | Dec. 10, 2 days |
| ST. ANNES: Empire | Dec. 12, 4 days |
| SACRISTON: Memorial | Dec. 19, 1 day |
| WESTERHOPE: Picture House | Dec. 27, 3 days |

**Fire Fighters** (Film of the London Fire Brigade).

*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph

*DIRECTION:* Peter Colin

| | |
|---|---|
| LEEDS, HOLBECK: Queens | Dec. 23, 3 days |
| PORTSMOUTH: Victoria | Dec. 22, 3 days |
| TORQUAY: Electric | Dec. 20, 6 days |

**For All Eternity** (A film of English cathedrals).

*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.

*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films.

*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson.

| | |
|---|---|
| ALTRINCHAM: Hippodrome | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| CASTLE CARY: Magnet Talkie Thea. | Dec. 31, 2 days |
| CLYDACH, VALE: Cinema | Dec. 27, 3 days |
| CREWE: Palace | Dec. 6, 3 days |
| DUNBAR: Playhouse | Dec. 6, 2 days |
| HILLSBORO': Roscoe Picture Palace | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| PENICUIK: Empire | Dec. 3, 6 days |
| ST. IVES: Scala Theatre | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| SPARKBROOK: Waldorf | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| TORRINGTON: Cinema | Dec. 6, 2 days |
| WHALLEY: Co-op Hall | Dec. 6, 3 days |

**Forbidden Frontier** (Political situation between Poland and Lithuania).

*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.

*PRODUCTION:* World Window Productions.

*SUPERVISION:* Sir Philip Gibbs.

| | |
|---|---|
| BRIDLINGTON: Lounge | Dec. 13, 3 days |
| FALKIRK: Regal | Dec. 27, 3 days |
| LONDON: World News, Praed Street | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| MANCHESTER: Scala, Withington | Dec. 6, 3 days |
| Tatler | Dec. 6, 6 days |
| REDDITCH: Gaumont | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| ROMILEY: Savoy | Dec. 16, 3 days |

**Heart of an Empire** (Historical significance of St. James's Park and the surrounding buildings and memorials).

*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.

*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films.

*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson

| | |
|---|---|
| FORRES: Picture House | Dec. 15, 1 day |
| SILSDEN: Picture Palace | Dec. 16, 3 days |

**Hollywood To-day** (Behind the scenes in Film City).

*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph

*PRODUCTION:* Rupert Grayson

| | |
|---|---|
| BATLEY: Empire | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| HALIFAX: Cosy | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| HUDDERSFIELD: Carlton | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| Lyceum | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| KEIGHLEY: Regent | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| LEEDS: Malvern | Dec. 27, 3 days |
| Regal, Crossgates | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| LONDON: Cameo, Charing X Road | Dec. 6, 3 days |
| Cameo, Victoria | Dec. 13, 3 days |
| Grand, Edgware Road | Dec. 13, 6 days |
| Palace, Wandsworth | Dec. 20, 3 days |
| MORECAMBE: Whitehall | Dec. 2, 3 days |

**Islands of the Bounty** (Islands associated with the famous mutiny).

*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.

| | |
|---|---|
| AIRDALE: Empire | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| BOWNESS ON WINDERMERE: Royalty | Dec. 6, 3 days |
| BEAUMARIS: Regal | Dec. 24, 2 days |
| CLEATOR MOOR: Hippodrome | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| DALTON IN FURNESS: Co-op. | Dec. 3, 2 days |
| DURHAM: Regal | Dec. 6, 3 days |
| ESHWINNING: Pavilion | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| GRANGEVILLA: Pavilion | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| HULL: Playhouse | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| HAVANT: Empire | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| HULL: West Park | Dec. 23, 3 days |
| MIDDLEWICH: Alhambra | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| NEWSHAM: Plaza | Dec. 10, 2 days |
| NEWMARKET: Kingsway | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| ST. ANNES: Empire | Dec. 19, 1 day |
| SANDBACH: Palace | Dec. 20, 3 days |
| USHAW MOOR: Empire | Dec. 27, 3 days |
| WINSFORD: Magnet | Dec. 13, 3 days |

**Key to Scotland** (Edinburgh documentary).

*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph

*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson

| | |
|---|---|
| BATH: News Theatre | Dec. 2, 3 days |

**Men Against the Sea** (Documentary of North Sea trawling).

*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph

*DIRECTION:* Vernon Sewell

| | |
|---|---|
| BECKENHAM: Regal | Dec. 27, 6 days |
| FELIXSTOWE: Playhouse | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| MAIDENHEAD: Ritz | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| PRESTON: Rialto | Dec. 8, 4 days |
| WINDSOR: Regal | Dec. 19, 4 days |

**Night Mail** (Documentary of the northward trip of the postal special).

*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.

*PRODUCTION:* Basil Wright, Harry Watt

| | |
|---|---|
| FREE STATE: Ballyhaunis Cinema | Dec. 5, 4 days |
| Ballaghadereen Cinema | Dec. 5, 4 days |
| Elphin Cinema | Dec. 5, 4 days |
| Strokestown Cinema | Dec. 5, 4 days |
| GILESGATE: Crescent | Dec. 10, 3 days |
| HENDON: Classic | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| KELTY: Picture House | Dec. 25, 1 days |
| LYNEMOUTH: Miners | Dec. 14, 3 days |
| SCOTSWOOD: Regent | Dec. 2, 3 days |

**Nomad in the North** (Scenic film of Norway).

*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph

*PRODUCTION & DIRECTION:* C. E. Hodges

| | |
|---|---|
| BARNSLEY: Ritz | Dec. 13, 6 days |
| BROMLEY: Palais de Luxe | Dec. 20, 6 days |
| CHESTER: Music Hall | Dec. 6, 6 days |
| CIRENCESTER: Picture House | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| LONDON: Gaumont, Finchley | Dec. 13, 6 days |
| News Theatre, Victoria | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| Regent, Stamford Hill | Dec. 13, 7 days |
| MANSFIELD: Rock Picture House | Dec. 23, 3 days |
| NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: Olympia | Dec. 13, 3 days |
| NEWPORT, I.O.W.: Odeon | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| STOCKPORT: Plaza | Dec. 13, 6 days |

**Plane Sailing** (The ins and outs of gliding).

*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph

*DIRECTION:* Bosworth Goldman

| | |
|---|---|
| BARROW: Regal | Dec. 27, 6 days |
| BASINGSTOKE: Plaza | Dec. 23, 3 days |
| BRISTOL: Hippodrome, Bedminster | Dec. 20, 6 days |
| CAMBRIDGE: Victoria | Dec. 20, 6 days |
| DEWSBURY: Regal | Dec. 13, 6 days |
| EDINBURGH: Monseigneur | Dec. 13, 3 days |
| HUDDERSFIELD: Carlton | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| HULL: Savoy | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| ILFRACOMBE: Scala | Dec. 6, 3 days |
| LEEDS: Hillcrest | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| LONDON: Pavilion, Hackney | Dec. 13, 6 days |
| World News, Praed Street | Dec. 6, 3 days |
| MANCHESTER: Scala, Withington | Dec. 13, 3 days |

# Shorts (contd.)

**Rooftops of London** (Documentary).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Paul Rotha

| | |
|---|---|
| BIRMINGHAM: New Regent | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| LIMAVADY: Roe Cinema | Dec. 15, 2 days |
| LONDON: Monseigneur News Theatre, Piccadilly | Dec. 20, 3 days |
| NOTTINGHAM: | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| Ilkeston Road Picture Palace | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| Tinsley: Tinsley Palace | Dec. 6, 3 days |
| THERNSCOE: Cinema | Dec. 17, 2 days |
| UPPER THORPE: Oxford Palace | Dec. 16, 3 days |

**Secrets of the Stars** (Spotlight on British stages and studios).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Argyle British Productions Ltd.

| | |
|---|---|
| BIRMINGHAM: Picture Hse., Harbourne | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| BRADFORD: Grange | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| BRIDGEWATER: Palace | Dec. 27, 3 days |
| CHEPSTOW: Palace | Dec. 20, 3 days |
| CHIPPENHAM: Gaumont | Dec. 23, 3 days |
| CINDERFORD: Palace | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| DORCHESTER: Palace | Dec. 23, 3 days |
| DUDLEY: Regent | Dec. 23, 7 days |
| FROME: Palace | Dec. 6, 6 days |
| FALKIRK Pavilion | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| GAINSBOROUGH: Grand | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| GRIMSBY: Savoy | Dec. 20, 6 days |
| HULL: Dorchester | Dec. 13, 6 days |
| INFRACOMBE: Scala | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| KIRKCALDY: Rialto | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| LEEDS: Headingley Picture House | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Bedford | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| Magnet | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| LONDON: Empire, Highgate | Dec. 26, 4 days |
| Globe, Acton | Dec. 13, 7 days |
| Marlborough, Holloway | Dec. 13, 7 days |
| Palace, Putney | Dec. 20, 7 days |
| Queens, Rushey Green | Dec. 20, 7 days |
| Picture House, Dalston | Dec. 13, 7 days |
| Tower, Peckham | Dec. 20, 7 days |
| LYDNEY: Picture House | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| MANCHESTER: Scala, Withington | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| Tatler | Dec. 6, 6 days |
| MIDDLESBROUGH: Pavilion | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| MONMOUTH: Picture House | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| MOTHERWELL: Pavilion | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| NORTHAMPTON: Exchange | Dec. 6, 3 days |
| NORTH SHIELDS: Prince's | Dec. 13, 6 days |
| SALTAIRE: Picture House | Dec. 23, 3 days |
| SOUTHEND-ON-SEA: Kursaal | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| WILLENHALL: Picture House | Dec. 23, 3 days |

**Snow Water** (Water power in the Swiss mountains).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* H. Dreyer

| | |
|---|---|
| CHESTERFIELD: Picture House | Dec. 27, 6 days |
| CIRENCESTER: Picture House | Dec. 20, 3 days |
| CREWE: Odeon | Dec. 20, 6 days |
| EDINBURGH: Monseigneur | Dec. 20, 3 days |
| GOOLE: Cinema Palace | Dec. 13, 3 days |
| HULL: Criterion | Dec. 20, 6 days |
| LONDON: Coronet, Notting Hill Gate | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| World News, Praed Street | Dec. 13, 3 days |
| PENGE: King's Hall | Dec. 23, 3 days |
| SUTTON COLDFIELD: Odeon | Dec. 13, 6 days |

**Statue Parade** (Historical treatment of London statues).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Paul Burnford and Ralph Keene

| | |
|---|---|
| BIRMINGHAM: Highgate Picture Thea. | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| BEAUMARIS: Cinema | Dec. 8, 2 days |
| ECCLESAL: Greystones | Dec. 8, 2 days |
| GREEN LANES: Picture House | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| HULL: Monica | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| TENBY: Royal Playhouse | Dec. 12, 3 days |
| TRURO: Plaza | Dec. 20, 3 days |
| TINSLEY: Tinsley Palace | Dec. 13, 3 days |
| WATTON: Regal Cinema | Dec. 13, 3 days |
| WARD END, BIRMINGHAM: Capitol | Dec. 16, 3 days |

**They Shall Not Pass** (Documentary of the Civil War in Spain; English commentary).
*DISTRIBUTION:* International Sound Films.
*PRODUCTION:* Ministry of Public Instruction in Madrid

| | |
|---|---|
| DUNDEE: Gray's | Dec. 6, 3 days |
| Astoria | Dec. 6, 3 days |
| GLASGOW: Magnet | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| Tonic | Dec. 13, 3 days |
| GREENOCK: Central | Dec. 20, 3 days |
| IRVINE: Regal | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| KYLSYTH: Pavilion | Dec. 8, 1 day |
| MOTHERWELL: Cinema House | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| RENTON: Roxy | Dec. 10, 2 days |
| SHETTLESTON: State | Dec. 1, 1 day |

**Way to the Sea** (Documentary of the roads and railways from London to the coast).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* J. B. Holmes

| | |
|---|---|
| ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE: Empire | Dec. 20, 3 days |
| HUDDERSFIELD: Waterloo | Dec. 20, 3 days |
| LEEDS: Cosy | Dec. 27, 3 days |
| MIDDLEWICH: Alhambra | Dec. 27, 3 days |
| NORTHAMPTON: Tivoli | Dec. 27, 3 days |
| ROTHWELL: Palace | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| SANDBACH: Palace | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| WINSFORD: Magnet | Dec. 23, 3 days |

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**Climatic Regions of the Empire.**
**The Magic North.**
**Igloo.**
**Prairie Winter.**
Further details from G.B. Instructional Films Bureau, Film House, Wardour Street, W.1.

**Wheel and Woe** (The evolution of the motor car).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Liberty
*DIRECTION:* W. G. Duncalf

| | |
|---|---|
| BARNSTAPLE: Gaumont | Dec. 6, 3 days |
| BATH: News Theatre | Dec. 6, 3 days |
| BELLSHILL: Picture House | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| BURSLEM: Coliseum | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| CHEPSTOW: Palace | Dec. 16, 3 days |
| CINDERFORD: Palace | Dec. 6, 3 days |
| COVENTRY: Gaumont | Dec. 19, 7 days |
| DERBY: Gaumont | Dec. 20, 6 days |
| ERITH: Ritz | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| GLASGOW: Bank Cinema, Clydebank | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| GLOSSOP: Empire | Dec. 20, 3 days |
| GRIMSBY: Savoy | Dec. 27, 6 days |
| GUERNSEY: Lyric | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| HORSHAM: Capitol | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| HULL: Central | Dec. 20, 6 days |
| ILFRACOMBE: Scala | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| KETTERING: Electric Pavilion | Dec. 27, 6 days |
| LANCASTER: Odeon | Dec. 27, 6 days |
| LEEDS: Hillcrest | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| LONDON: Broadway Pavilion, Ealing | Dec. 13, 7 days |
| Hippodrome, Camden Tn | Dec. 20, 7 days |
| King's Cross Cinema | Dec. 13, 7 days |
| Monseigneur, Charing X | Dec. 20, 3 days |
| Monseigneur, Strand | Dec. 13, 3 days |
| Palladium, Palmers Green | Dec. 13, 6 days |
| Picture House, Old Kent Rd | Dec. 20, 7 days |
| Rivoli, Whitechapel | Dec. 13, 7 days |
| Sphere, Tott. Court Rd. | Dec. 20, 3 days |
| MAIDENHEAD: Ritz | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| MALVERN: Malvern Theatre | Dec. 2, 3 days |
| MANCHESTER: Scala, Withington | Dec. 27, 3 days |
| Tatler | Dec. 20, 6 days |
| MANSFIELD: Empire | Dec. 13, 6 days |
| NORTHAMPTON: Exchange | Dec. 27, 6 days |
| OLDHAM: Odeon | Dec. 13, 6 days |
| REDDITCH: Gaumont | Dec. 27, 6 days |
| ST. AUSTELL: Odeon | Dec. 30, 3 days |
| SCARBOROUGH: Capitol | Dec. 9, 3 days |
| SOUTHEND-ON-SEA: Kursaal | Dec. 13, 3 days |
| SUTTON: Surrey County | Dec. 20, 6 days |
| WAKEFIELD: Empire | Dec. 27, 6 days |

# Foreign Films

**Un Carnet de Bal** (Winner of the Mussolini Cup French).
*DIRECTION:* Julien Duvivier
*STARRING:* Françoise Rosay
Harry Baur
Pierre Blanchar
Fernandel
Robert Lynen
LONDON: Studio One — Dec. 3, indefinitely

**The New Gulliver** (Russian puppet film).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Soyokino
*DIRECTION:* A. Ptushko
LONDON: Forum — Dec. 1, indefinitely

**Squadrone Bianco** (Italian).
*PRODUCTION:* Roma Films
*DIRECTION:* Augusto Genina
*STARRING:* Fosco Gianchetti
Anthony Ceuta
Fulvia Lanzi
LONDON: Academy — Dec. 1, indefinitely

**Tales from the Vienna Woods** (Austrian).
*DIRECTION:* George Jacoby
*STARRING:* Wolf Albach-Retty
Leo Slizak
Magda Schneider
LONDON: Studio One — Dec. 1, 2 days

**Versprich Mir Nichts** (German).
*DIRECTOR:* Wolfgang Liebeneiner
*STARRING:* Luise Ullrich
Victor de Kowa
Heinrich George
LONDON: Berkeley — Dec. 1, indefinitely

**Underworld** (From Maxim Gorki's novel—French).
*DIRECTION:* Jean Renoir
*STARRING:* Jean Gabin
Louis Jouvet
Suzy Prim
LONDON: Curzon — Dec. 1, indefinitely

**Westfront 1918** (German).
*DIRECTOR:* G. W. Pabst
LONDON: Ladies Taylor's Hall, Gt. Garden Street, E.1 — Dec. 4, 1 day


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With English dialogue

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With "Kodachrome" there is actually no grain at all in the processed film, the final image consisting only of pure transparent dyes.

Then again, those deviations from the theoretically correct exposure that are bound to occur from time to time are **automatically compensated for** during the processing of black-and-white Ciné-Kodak Film by a photo-electric cell device exclusive to Kodak. A substantial margin of error is thus permitted, and screen results are practically constant in brightness, quality and detail.

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**Ciné-Kodak Eight Panchromatic Film** (8 mm. after processing). A superfine grained film, made specially for the Ciné-Kodak Eight. Gives full-sized screen pictures of sparkling quality.

**"Kodachrome" Film** (16 mm.). A full colour film without grain, "screen" or pattern of any kind. Requires no filters on camera or projector. Fast as Ciné-Kodak Panchromatic Film. Special Type "A" is available for use with "Photoflood" lighting.

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"Kodachrome" Sound Recording.
"Kodachrome" Type "A" Sound Recording.

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# FILM SOCIETIES AND CLUBS

**EAST LONDON FILM SOCIETY:** After a successful season of 16 mm. film shows at Toynbee Hall last year, it is proposed to form an East London Film Society, with the idea of giving monthly shows on Sunday afternoons in a local cinema.

Cost of membership will be 10*s.* for the season. Further information from the Hon. Secretary of the Film Group, Toynbee Hall, Commercial Street, London, E.1.

**OXFORD FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, E. F. Bowtell, Esq., 105 Victoria Road, Oxford.

At the meeting on Sunday, November 14th, the programme was headed by Duvivier's *The Golem*. Other films included Benchley's *How to Be a Detective*, Starevitch's *Butterfly Queen* and Max Brand's *Nachtliche Ruhestorung*. *Turksib*, *Marie Galante* and *Dawn* are scheduled for future presentation.

**THE FEDERATION OF CINEMATOGRAPH SOCIETIES:** Chairman, Harry Walden, A.R.P.S. Hon. Secretary, F. P. Barnitt, Esq., Filmers, Forest Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

After having been formally inaugurated early this year, the Federation is well on its way to being firmly established.

The main purpose has been to get cine societies together in association with the Royal Photographic Society, to secure those benefits which come from working together. The preliminary work has mainly consisted of the preparation of a panel of judges and a panel of lecturers. The latter covers a wide field of subjects and is already being made good use of. An inter-club competition is in course of arrangement for the new year, for which Mr. Barnitt has promised a cup.

The following societies have become members of the Federation: Beckenham C.S., Birmingham F.S. (Cine Section), Finchley A.C.S., Grimsby P.S. (Cine Section), Ilford A.C.S., Kodak Works P.S. (Cine Section), Leatherhead Cine Circle, London A.F.C., Manchester F.S., Montagu Pictures, South London C.S., West Essex F.S., Whitehall C.S., Wimbledon C.C., Rayners Lance Camera Club, Cambridge and District P.C. (Cine Group), West Kent Cine Club, Sonodisc Film Productions, Heston C.C., Kingston C.C., and Wisbech P.S. (Cine Section). In addition the Association of Cine Technicians and the Guild of Projectionists, which are affiliated to the R.P.S., will as from January 1st be linked through the Cine Federation instead of through the older part of the Photographic Alliance organisation.

**COLCHESTER FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Lewis Halsey, 273 Ipswich Road, Colchester.

The opening performance of the Colchester Film Society's first season took place on Thursday, October 28th, when *The White Hell of Pitz Palu*, directed by G. W. Pabst and Arnold Fanck, was shown. The film was introduced by Paul Capon, who was responsible for the editing of *Little Friend*, *Roadhouse* and *The Clairvoyant*, and who later directed *Nerve Strain* and *Radio Lover*.

**WOLVERHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Membership Secretary, Miss D. Roston, 60 Great Brickkiln Street. Hon. Programme Secretary, E. L. Packer, Esq., 58 Himley Crescent, Wolverhampton.

Owing to decrease in membership attributable to several causes, only four meetings will be held for subscription of 10*s.* 6*d.* At the first meeting in October members saw *So Ended a Great Love*, *How to Sleep* (Benchley), *Plane Sailing*, and *Black Journey*. November meeting: *Lac-aux-Dames*, *Tawny Owl*, *Gentlemen in Top Hats*, and *How to Train a Dog*. The G.P.O. Film Unit gave a display to the Society on November 15th.

**THE GUILD OF CATHOLIC TEACHERS' FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Terence Grant, Esq., The Catholic Institute, Newton Place, Charing Cross, Glasgow.

At the meeting on November 11th there was a discussion on "Censorship" when the methods of film classification employed by "Choisir," "The American Decency League" and "The British Film Institute" were examined. It was suggested that the Guild should make use of the Decency League literature and send out periodical lists of approved films to the schools. This suggestion is receiving consideration.

On November 18th and 19th there was a show of the Society's films in St. Aloysius Hall, Glasgow. There will also be exhibitions in the various provincial centres in the near future.

The Rev. Father Valentine of the Catholic Film Society will give a lecture to the Guild in January, on "The Film in Education."

## NEW AMATEUR COMPETITION

The National Trust whose aim is the preservation of the natural beauty of the countryside, is sponsoring a competition for silent 16 mm. films of Trust properties. The films should not run less than 10 minutes and coloured films are eligible to compete.

Preference will be given films dealing with several, rather than one, property. But no two prizes in respect of films of the same property or group of properties will be awarded. The Trust reserves copyright of any prize-winning exhibit.

Intending competitors should communicate with: The Competition Secretary, The National Trust, 7 Buckingham Palace Gardens, London, S.W.1.

The Prizes will be: First, twenty pounds; second, fifteen pounds; third, five pounds.

The closing date is July 1st, 1938.

Prize winning films will be used in connection with lectures, etc., to further the work of the Trust. They will be titled as a prize winning film, and will bear the name of the competitor.

If amateurs will communicate with the National Trust office they will be sent a list of the different properties, and a leaflet regarding the work of the trust. Information about the kinds of films needed will appear in the next issue of *World Film News*.

**THE CATHOLIC FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Rev. Ferdinand Valentine, O.P., 36 Great Smith Street, London S.W.1.

The first Town Hall display this season was at Lewisham Town Hall on November 23rd, when "The Holy Mass" was screened and the new sound version of the Society's social film, *Great Awakening*. The next Town Hall display is at Finsbury, on Monday, January 17th.

The next monthly display is at Millicent Fawcett Hall on Wednesday, December 1st, when the Grail film will be shown and a special lecture on the movement given.

Spoken commentaries have been added to the Society's principal films and records on religious subjects are also ready. There are facilities at 36 Gt. Smith Street for recording speeches or choirs; full particulars on application.

As heretofore, the Society arranges film displays of Catholic interest in Convents, Schools and Parish Halls, providing all the necessary apparatus and expert operators. A commentary can be had with any C. F. S. film, if desired.

**WEST ESSEX FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary L. G. Watson, Esq., 10 Meadway, Buckhurst Hill.

The Fourth Annual General Meeting was held on October 31st, and officers were elected for the ensuing year.

During the past year some members of the Society made a film for the Mortlock Sterilized Milk Supply Co., Ltd., of Manor Park. The Film Unit formed (which includes among its operations the filming of carnivals, fetes, etc.) made a film for the Eton Manor Club of events in their Coronation Party. The Society film, *Hiking*, was commenced (and is well in hand) and several members began private films, some of which have been completed and the others are in course of production. These achievements have only been possible by dint of the work put in by all members in their respective capacities, and the Society now embarks on a new year, the aim of all members being to continue and increase the progress made in past years.

**MANCHESTER AND SALFORD FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, R. Cordwell, Esq., 13 Milwain Drive, Heaton Chapel, Stockport.

The Society is making excellent progress, present membership being 510, and increasing daily. Indications are that the numbers will be nearly 1,000 before the close of the season.

Recent arrangements include joint membership with the Manchester and District Film Institute Society, for the additional payment of 1*s.*, making a total subscription of 11*s.*

The following films have been shown this season: September 26th: *Fredlös*, *Graf von Carabes*, *The Great Train Robbery* and *Madrid To-Day*; October 24th: *Unfinished Symphony*, *Millions of Us*, *Changes in the Franchise*, *Le Vieux Château*; November 21st: *Merlusse*, *To-Day We Live*, *The World To-Day*, *Galalee*. On December 19th the programme includes *We*

(*Continued over the page.*)

*from Kronstadt*, *The Basque Children*, *Den Haag* and *Colour Abstracts*. Further shows on January 23rd, February 20th, March 20th, April 17th. *W.F.N.* is on sale at all events arranged.

**FILM SOCIETY OF GLASGOW:** Hon. Secretary, D. Paterson Walker, Esq., 129 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, C.2.

Films shown on November 7th were Rotha's *Statue Parade*, Len Lye's *Trade Tattoo*, Cavalcanti's *The Saving of Bill Blewitt*, *The Grey Seal*, *Glasgow and the Coast in* 1910, and *Der Herrscher* with Emil Jannings.

As the renting firm distributing *Fredlos* and *Janosik* have gone into bankruptcy, the original dates planned for the showing of these films have had to be altered. Both will be re-booked at the earliest available moment.

**IPSWICH FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Mary Banks, 463 Woodbridge Road, Ipswich. Programme Secretary, Gordon Hales, Esq., 36 Constable Road, Ipswich.

The Society held the first performance of its fourth season on Sunday, October 3rd, when Rotha's *Contact*, *Carmen*, *Rain*, and the Swedish film *En Natt* were presented. On October 26th the programme included *Gentlemen in Top Hats and Gentlemen in Crowns* and the Irish film *The Dawn*. On November 19th Alberto Cavalcanti lectured on *The Documentary Film*. Subsequent activities include the presentation of Fritz Lang's *M* in its entirety on December 12th, together with a film produced by Pathé-Frères about 1909, *Cinderella and the Glass Slipper*.

**BLACKHEATH FILM CLUB:** Hon. Secretary, J. Gibson, Esq., 6 St. German's Place, London, S.E.3.

The Gala Week from October 11th to 16th showed an all-round improvement in the Club's as well as in members' films, and from all accounts the programme was a success, although the attendances were not up to last year's mark. Documentary films proved more popular than the Club's *He was Her Man*.

Many London Societies sent representatives, and the B.F.C. thanks them for their support and hopes that return visits may be arranged.

A story competition has been arranged to find material for the next production, members judging by vote at a special meeting held for the purpose. Projection meetings are fixed for Dec. 1st, Jan. 5th, Feb. 2nd, March 2nd, April 6th, May 4th, and anyone interested will be welcomed at the studios, 2 Banchory Road, Blackheath, S.E.3.

# YOUR FIRST FILM STORY

***Here are some good production ideas for amateur movie makers, though W.F.N. would like to receive suggestions for films which have a wider range of subject and will appeal to a wider audience than those suggested here***

To the amateur who is contemplating the production of his first "photoplay," I would offer the following advice:

Choose a suitable plot or incident—something which will run to no more than about 150 or 200 feet.
Have only three or four characters in the story.
Let as much as possible of the action take place out of doors.
Film as much as you can on the same day.
Introduce plenty of close-ups.
Use only one camera, only one kind of film; and use an exposure meter throughout.

To deal first with the choice of a plot. Bear in mind that a realistic effect is obtained more easily when people are acting as themselves, in familiar surroundings, than when they are pretending to be members of a totally different class of society, engaged in romantic or nefarious pursuits which they would seldom attempt in real life. The dapper bank clerk is not transformed into a convincing "crook" merely by wearing a thick muffler and a cap pulled over his eyes; nor are we deceived when the typist or salesgirl reclines langourously on a divan skilfully manipulating a long cigarette holder, in the rôle of vamp.

How much simpler it is to select an amusing incident which might take place in the garden, and elaborate it until a few members of the family can perform it as a complete little story; or to take two or three friends into the country, and show what happens when they discover a lonely hut, or a "dead" body, or a mysterious letter, or a lost child. Practical jokes with surprise endings, faked accidents, unexpected meetings, thrilling finishes to races or matches—all these give scope for the production of delightful little cameos of life which will be convincing by reason of their very naturalness, particularly if the scenario is carefully prepared, so that the most thrilling incident provides a climax at the end of the film. Indeed, the story with the surprise ending is eminently suitable for a short film. Then, again, most people are in touch with some local organisation. There are gymnasiums, sports clubs, boy scout troops, and so on, in every town, and members of these are easily persuaded to act a story before the camera. The school teacher, too, can get his boys to do anything for him, though, if a child film is contemplated, small nephews and nieces make wonderful natural actors once they have been trained to avoid looking at the camera.

A suitable story, then, having been put into scenario form, the next thing is to decide upon the cast, bearing in mind that it is advisable to keep it small. The reason for this is that an audience is confused by too many characters, and has not time to sort them out before the film is over.

When all is ready for filming, it is a good plan to complete as much of the story as possible on one bright, sunny day. If this is done, the exposures are more likely to be even throughout, the characters are all available, and willing to enter into the spirit of the action, and there is less likelihood of differences in their dress or appearance being noticed.

Finally, to put your story "over" in the best possible way, so that the point is not lost upon your audience, forget all about titles at first. Make the story tell itself, as clearly as possible, in pictures alone. Join up the film in its proper order. View it, cut it, view it again; alter it, improve the order of the shots, cross-cut, until you are finally satisfied that the story is as clear as it can be with the film at your disposal. You may then find that you do not need any subtitles at all, in which case you have done an excellent piece of work.

You will then have something interesting and individual to inflict on visitors to your home, and to rouse the envy of your neighbour with his Super-Special Camera De Luxe.

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Model 138J. Has the same features but is a two-case model. One case contains the projector which is operated without removing, and the other case contains the speaker. £146.

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**For Catalogue (price 3d.) and forms of application for films, apply to:**

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# world FILM news

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**By David Low, Hugh Walpole, James Bridie, A. J. Cummings, McKnight Kauffer, Robert Donat, Philip Guedalla, Herbert Morrison, Sir Archibald Sinclair**

STRIP-TEASE ON BROADWAY
TIME, MR. PRIESTLEY, TIME
A BAD EARTH FOR WOMEN
GUIDE TO NEW And
GENERAL RELEASE FILMS

**JANUARY 1s**

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*and especially to*

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*and to all members of A.C.T. who by their expert work contributed to the success of "The League at Work" "The Smoke Menace," "Children at School," and other R.F.U. productions.*

*From the Directors and Staff of*

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*Gerrard 1958–9*

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**"PARTY DISH"**
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✸

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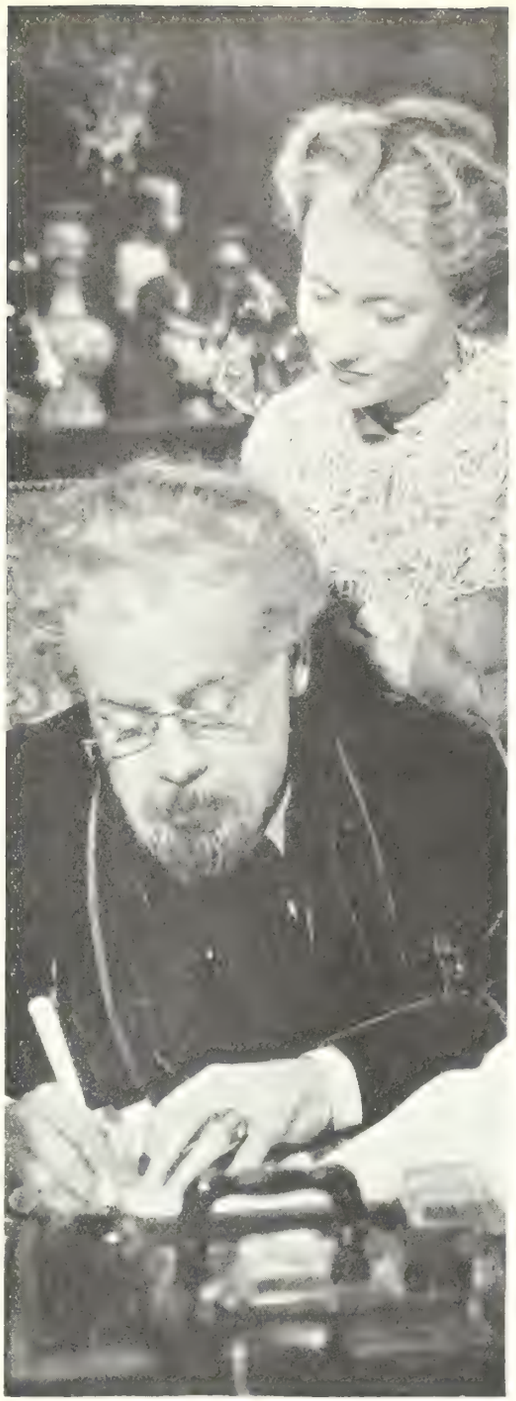
# THE WAY FORWARD

# What 1938 could mean for British Films

## by John Grierson



*"The Life of Emile Zola"*

At this time of year the film critics are all busy at their little game of placing the best films; and it is surprising with what unanimity across the world the first twenty or thirty are selected. But *World Film News*, with that nice variety of method which distinguishes it, has gone beyond the critics and asked experts in other fields to help in the adjudication. There is James Bridie, the dramatist, Sir Hugh Walpole, the novelist, David Low, the cartoonist, A. J. Cummings, the political writer, Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Liberal leader, McKnight Kauffer from art and Herbert Read from the higher criticism. It is a noble company and there must surely be a special word of wisdom among them.

Set their judgment against the official list of firsts issued by the National Board of Review in New York. Here is the American order of merit: (1) *Night Must Fall.* (2) *The Life of Emile Zola.* (3) *Black Legion.* (4) *Camille.* (5) *Make Way for Tomorrow.* (6) *The Good Earth.* (7) *They Won't Forget.* (8) *Captains Courageous.* (9) *A Star is Born.* (10) *Stage Door.* Except for *Zola*, *The Good Earth* and *Captains Courageous*—brave and spacious films all of them—our British experts have very different views. They make their selections from a wider world: from Germany, France, Russia—even from Britain. The American list, in comparison, is self-centred and rather parochial.

For me the special significance of the British choice is that British films are included with affection, and that they are the simpler films like *Edge of the World*, *Farewell Again*, *Storm in a Teacup* and *To-day We Live.* The thunder of those expensive masterworks which, two years ago, were to conquer the world, has died down; and the small voice of the simple things well done is being heard at last. Our British film world has, like the Prodigal Son, been journeying in far countries and wasting its substance in riotous living. There is even a certain sweet accuracy in the ancient description that "when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want . . . and no man gave unto him." No man gives unto him to-day.

It has been true all along that the best interest of British films as of any films, must lie in honest and patient work. Brilliance of showmanship may bring its great successes but the basis is good story telling, good acting and good craftsmanship. Unfortunately, we have had the whole business of cinema wrong way about. We have permitted it to think fancifully of fortunes instead of making a simple return on its money. We have allowed it to serve the vanity of a few egotists instead of creating a picture-making community working in co-ordinated teams.

There is nothing on earth to stand in the way of an immediate development of the British cinema. All that is wanted is some honesty, a little humility and an interest in the work for its own sake. I believe that any producer who appreciates the simple and essential values of a good story well told, knows how to keep to the mark of his money, and is strong enough to keep dreams of fortune out of his head, can wade in now and make an honourable contribution to the future. The larger themes and the more spectacular achievements will come not by extravagant and melodramatic assault, but as by-products of a quieter process.

The question in my mind is whether our lead is good enough. Will the men who control the distribution machines appreciate the good sense of a long-term constructive policy, or must they continue to fall for the confident accents of the faker. Will capital, which has been deceived so much, come to its senses about films and film people? Will it give honesty a trial for a change or must it, too, be wooed with idiot's promises? Will the writers and artists realise that the big money is here to-day and gone to-morrow and that simpler salaries may mean longer and more solid returns? There is no great mystery about the future of British films, only the mystery of really wanting it, really working for it, and trusting those who sensibly do both.

And so I am glad to see in the list of films for the year the honourable mention of films like *Edge of the World*, *Farewell Again*, *Elephant Boy*, *Storm in a Teacup*, and *To-Day We Live.* They may not be smash hits but every one of us knows how, in each case, sincerity and good workmanship went to their making. It is just possible that they represent together a turning point in the history of British films. May their tribe increase!

# 1937—CELEBRI

## Sir Hugh Walpole

*Der Ammenkoenig:* good thick period stuff with a real sense of humour. *Le Roman d'un Tricheur:* best film of the year. Delightfully intelligent and oblique in its humour. *The Good Earth:* excellent photography. *The Edge of the World:* first-class atmosphere. *Captains Courageous:* sea picture grand, and Freddie and Tracy admirable. *Farewell Again:* although too restless, beautifully directed; script exceptional.

## A. J. Cummings

I am afraid I am not in a position to say what I consider to have been the best six films of the year, since I go to the picture-house not more than a dozen times a year.

The only two films from which I have ever received undiluted pleasure were Chaplin's *Modern Times* and Wells's *The Man Who Could Work Miracles.* The news pictures I could look at for hours. The documentaries grow curiouser and curiouser, but on the whole better and better. Walt Disney gives me more mental and emotional satisfaction than any love drama I have ever had to look at on the screen.

With one (female) exception, screen lovers (who appear to be chosen primarily because they photograph well) have not the foggiest idea, poor muts, how to make love; and they are compelled to express ideas which psychologically and in their outward form are not much above the level of the headline sex-clichés of the American tabloid newspaper.

What would I like to see on the screen in the future? I know what I don't want to see.

Cut out about 80 per cent of the American hocus-pocus and 90 per cent of the everlasting leg chorus with its dismal repetitive jazz—almost a physiological reversion to the primitive tom-toms; forget the word "colossal" in terms either of cash or stage setting and spend the money instead on real actors and actresses in preference to Greek torsos and dolly profiles; and on intelligent scenario writers who can produce scripts that deal with life as human beings know it to be; not according to the grotesque inventions of American and Continental producers with a cock-eyed view about box-office receipts. All human values are now so continuously distorted on the screen that they no longer carry even the rapture of surprise.

Producers as a class make horrid mistakes about the mentality of servant girls and city clerks. The producer who first finds out what these mistakes are and gives the public what it doesn't know it wants will make a well-deserved fortune.

These remarks I know are not fit for your "symposium." But "ca ne fait rien."

## James Bridie

What with one thing and another I haven't seen a very representative bunch of films during 1937. My vote in this symposium would be unfair and uninteresting.

My complaint against those I *have* seen would be that of the nineteenth century agnostic against the Universe. From time to time I was entertained, moved, excited, shocked and bored; but I could see no evidence of Design in the little universes I had presented to me. There were intimations of immortality and order in the last of the silent films, but they don't seem to have reached the talkies yet.

As the likes and dislikes of an atheist cannot have any significance, perhaps you will excuse me from recording mine. A Happy New Year to you.

## Sir Archibald Sinclair

*Farewell Again, The Life of Emile Zola, Lost Horizon, The Plainsman, Spanish Earth* and *Le Roman d'un Tricheur.*

## Herbert Read

*Dead End, The Gay Desperado, A Day at the Races, Der Ammenkoenig, Un Carnet de Bal,* and *Winterset.*

*Dead End* seems to me to come nearest to the formal requirements of a great work of art, although I think it is a little restricted in place—one of the unities the film can afford to disregard. *The Gay Desperado* for its enormous gusto. *A Day at the Races* for its surrealistic moments. *Der Ammenkoenig* for being historical but not dull. *Un Carnet de Bal* because this particular cluster of French actors seem to me to be the best in the whole film world. *Winterset* because it is a brave attempt at poetry, only spoilt by being poetic.

Films that I would like to see? They are legion, but here are four:

*Pantagruel:* a Rabelaisian film, with perhaps Laughton in the title role.

*The Art of Living:* a documentary, showing the city of the future, but built up, not from models, but from existing houses, schools, roads, etc., in various parts of the world; with scenes of individuals and groups enjoying life in these ideal surroundings. The *possible whole* constructed from the *actual particulars.*

*Le Roman Noir:* a film of mystery and horror based on the classic examples of this kind of romance—"Melmoth the Wanderer" or "The Mysteries of Udolpho" or "The Monk." But done, not crudely, but with all the apparatus of a modern surrealist interpretation of these stories.

A "straight" fairy-tale film—*Cinderella* or *Rapunzel* or *Jack the Giant-killer,* but done with realism and fantasy instead of the usual farcical humour and sentimentality.

## E. McKnight Kauffer

*Elephant Boy, Farewell Again, Love is News, Der Ammenkoenig, Le Roman d'un Tricheur,* and the Imperial Airways film, made by Rotha.

## David Low

To me, the best films of 1937 were:

*Ebb Tide:* good colour—good Homolka—story spoilt by introduction of lurve-interest. *Zola:* full marks to Muni for character-atmosphere—I think his *Zola* shades his *Pasteur* and definitely beats his Chinaman in *The Good Earth* (but then a European made up as a Chinaman always annoys me, because the different facial angle makes it impossible. Why didn't they get a Chinaman?) *Lost Horizon:* pleasantly sentimental two-hour escape for a disgruntled satirist. *My Man Godfrey:* witty. Carole Lombard is a competent doll. *They Gave Him a Gun:* Gripping (as they say). *Three Smart Girls:* The story was bosh, but Deanna Durbin was surprising. To my mind the discoveries of the year are Deanna Durbin and Judy Garland. I loathe child actresses, and neither of these are particularly attractive physically; but the commanding personality and mature talents of both simply astonish me.

I should add that in Film Cartoons Walt Disney has maintained his average, but his copy-cats have descended a couple of yards lower in the twelve months. For heavens sake, why not a new idea?

What I Want: More historical films with less of the ham romance and more of the March-of-Time spirit. Less of the childish slapstick which British producers seem to think is English humour. Anyone would think we still lived in the Middle Ages when people used to laugh at hunchbacks.

## Norman Wilson

A surgeon's knife can cut a large slice out of a year's film-going, and there are some grievous gaps in my record. The plaudits of colleagues still ring in my ears to remind me that two films, *Zola* and *The Good Earth,* remain to add zest to the new year. But even incomplete, it has been a good year's viewing. With its passing go my thanks to Gregory la Cava, Powell and Lombard (not forgetting Mischa Auer and Eugene Pallette) for showing with sparkling conclusiveness in *My Man Godfrey* that the Marx Brothers are more normal than is usually suspected. My loudest huzzas go to Michael Powell who, in this year of debate, pointed a surer and saner way to salvation for British productions than any measure of Government protection. The screams of his gulls in *The Edge of the World* get more than will all the F.B.I. screams for assistance.

To Strand go similar thanks for *To-day We Live,* for its restrained, moving realism, sense of character and feeling for the deeper spiritual tragedy beneath the physical misery of South Wales; even more for voicing uncensorably the true core of the problem which no social service palliatives can affect.

# ES' SELECTION

Among the Continentals, *Pépé le Moko* was whisked off to America before I could see it. Of the others, only *Der Herrscher* (by reason of Janning's virtuosity and the bitterish observance of the after-burial family gathering) and *We From Kronstadt* (which recaptured in parts some of the movie fire of the Soviet classics) induced in me something of the admiration aroused by the best of the recent American films.

The year's surprise, for me, was Dorothy Arzner's *Craig's Wife*, a clean-cut brittle little piece with a passionless objectivity on the Tchekov plane.

## Basil Wright

*Emile Zola.* Great in Muni's acting, but even greater because it reminds us of the conscience we should be feeling to-day, but have tended to forget. The film of the year.

*The Edge of the World.* The first British feature film to take its subject from real-life and keep a sincerity of treatment right through the melodramatics of the story. Easily the best British film so far.

*Way out West.* Wins from *A Day at the Races* by a short head by its consistent brilliance from beginning to end.

*To-day We Live.* Documentary at last finds its feet among the ordinary people. Dramatically convincing, and concerned with the most vital problem of the day.

*They Won't Forget.* Runner-up to Zola as a social document, and as a piece of film craft absolutely impeccable.

*Spanish Earth.* The most sincere film of the year. Succeeds in beating the propagandists at their own game, and presents the best commentary yet written.

## H. Forsyth Hardy

*The Edge of the World:* because, as a Scot, I am grateful for one of the few real films about Scotland.

*The Good Earth:* not so much because it is a technical triumph for Hollywood, but because a noble theme has been found for the application of these technical resources; because of two memorable performances, Luise Rainer's and Paul Muni's.

*Farewell Again:* because a British studio film has at last brought something of the British character to the screen.

*A Star is Born:* because at last someone has seen colour in its proper perspective, using it to point intimate and dramatic moments and, for the rest, restraining it to a natural and convincing unobtrusiveness.

*The Plainsman:* because I have always been attracted by the wild vigorous freedom of the Western.

*A Day at the Races.*

(I have not yet seen *The Life of Emile Zola.*)

Three documentaries, *To-day We Live*, *Plow that Broke the Plains*, and *Techierva Hut.*

And one Disney, *The Old Mill.*

## Andrew Buchanan

*The Edge of the World:* because it denotes the birth of the British Fictional-Documentary film. *Dead End:* because it reveals how to make a *major* box-office proposition out of realism; as Goldwyn might say—"It's raw, but it's cooked; it's tough, but it's tender. What a meal!!" *The Devil is Driving:* because it shows how America handles propaganda in a proper way—transforming it into entertainment that will reach millions. The Devil is also driving on our roads, but the traffic-block in Wardour Street has distracted us from the fact. *Lloyds of London* and *Parnell:* because they remind us of the fine screen material Britain is offering—to producers abroad. *Zola:* because it is a dramatic and thrilling sermon, and as we seem to have forgotten the other one made on the Mount, it does us good. *Spanish Earth:* because it proves that screen journalism begins where newsreels end, and because it teaches us that a *running* commentary is really much more effective if it merely walks.

I should like to see a regular flow of British films, the production costs of which would be regained with profit from the home market alone. Films which could have been made in no other country but Britain.

## Herbert Morrison

I would like to see on the screen of all cinemas in the world a great film telling the story of war through the ages and showing—which is the fact—that war either did not settle the problem it was supposed to have settled or that it created more problems for the future than it settled in respect of the past.

And then the film should show the proper way of settling international disputes, namely, by conciliation or judicial procedure, and the happiness of mankind as a result of political, social and economic co-operation rather than conflict.

I would like to see a film showing the preposterous fact of poverty because of plenty and demonstrating how this absurdity might be ended.

Among the documentary films I would like to see more films illustrating the workings of the various departments of local government. Among the best of our municipalities such splendid work is being done for health, education, housing, open spaces and the protective services, yet a large proportion of the ratepayers do not know about it.

I would like to see first-class films—really interesting and even enthralling films—which could be built out of the creative work of the best of our local authorities.

## Philip Guedalla

I do not want to see any more Historical Epics in which every possible inaccuracy is presented with a wealth of credits and charming young ladies are instructed to blow out their pretty cheeks in a determined effort to grow old gracefully. I do not want to see any more of these, because I feel anxious for the sanity of our schoolchildren when they compare the facts which they are taught at school with the fiction that is purveyed no less by British studios than by Hollywood.

But the trouble is that I still want to go to the pictures; and when I get there, I want to see fiction and adventure that are remote from the world in which I live. This may seem a little hard on the home producer. But Shakespeare managed it: so why not the cameraman? And I want the whole world to see pictures of the scale and stability of Britain's life, the union of still, traditional backgrounds with scrambling, industrial foregrounds, and the cheerful crowds of Democracy.

## Robert Donat

I would like to see more and more films conceived and brought to life entirely within the studio walls. In other words, I would like to see far less of the adaptor and his maiming and murdering, and far more of the creative scenarist who knows how to cater originally for the needs of the film. I believe this sort of work to be potentially rich, and worthy of the brightest writing brains. It is a medium that Shakespeare himself would have welcomed. (Remember, beloved high-brows, middle-brows, low-brows and no-brows, he was merely a hack-workman making clothes to measure.) But writing for the screen is a job that has to be learnt, and learnt thoroughly, in the studio.

More and more, I would like to see films of English, Welsh, Irish and Scottish life, films with the same human and documentary qualities as we find in *The Edge of the World.*

Finally, I would like to have the pleasure of listening to the music of Cockney and Lancashire in a Hollywood boulevard cinema, and hearing it eagerly recognised. I hope the day will come when "Blimey" will be as universally acknowledged as "sez you".

## Sir Henry Page-Croft

I would like to see pictures which are in keeping with the spirit and tradition of the British race, stories woven around English villages, Scottish and Welsh scenery, and a whole series of pictures from stories of the Dominions, India and the Colonies, both historic and fiction.

In short, I think you would get a great response if all the things we care for most were presented in place of exaggerated crime or sex stories which have monopolised much too great a proportion of the pictures shown in England.

# WHAT, NO DAME?

WHEN Marco Polo travelled, the East was no more to Europe than a strange dream. Men knew that silks, jewels and spices came from there, but no European had ever penetrated into unknown Central Asia until—

What is this, a creeping title or something?

I beg your pardon, sir?

I said you are a long time getting around to the point. Who was this Marco Polo, words of one syllable. I'll give you ten minutes.

Well sir, Marco Polo was a Venetian merchant who went to China, worked for seventeen years at the court of Kublai Khan, and came back again with the story.

What kind of a looking guy was he?

I don't know sir, I've often wondered.

Fine. You'll know when the picture's finished. Right now I can tell you he was a dead-ringer for our best box-office star.

What was he doing in China all that time?

He was in the service of the Grand Khan, going about seeing that all the little Khans paid their contributions, I suppose.

A lousy income tax collector, eh?

Yes, sir.

Well get this. Marco Polo's adventures were a romance. See?

Yes sir, of course they were.

Well, who was the dame?

I beg your pardon, sir?

You heard me. I said who was the dame. The dame, the dame, the dame, the dame, the dame. The babe, the skirt, the frail. Ever hear of them? First thing Marco Polo does in China is, he falls in love.

With whom, sir?

That's what *I'm* asking *you*. You got the dope, ain't you?

Yes sir, but there was no dame.

Oh yes there is. You're going to find her, too, and pretty quick. Has this Kublai any daughters?

Yes sir.

Well, what about them? How about one of them?

**¶ Hearing that 'The Travels of Marco Polo' was being filmed, we promptly asked Russell Ferguson to discuss with a famous producer how this film ought to be made. His report is given below verbatim.**

**¶ Our readers will not of course confuse it with *The Adventures of Marco Polo*, recently completed by United Artists with Gary Cooper. That we expect is much more worthy of its great theme.**

No, sir. It seems he married them to the little Khans. It was part of his policy.

Ah, to hell with his policy. Who else is there?

Well sir, there's a princess.

A princess. Why didn't you say so? Now we're beginning to get someplace. Let's hear about her.

She was betrothed to the Khan of Persia. Marco Polo took her to Persia to be married, when he was coming home, after seventeen years.

Maybe we can use some of that. How old is he then?

About thirty-eight, I fancy, sir.

Well, we'll do it another way. Listen, this princess is Kublai's daughter. The minute Marco arrives in China—how long does it take him to get there, anyhow?

About four years, sir.

Well, we can forget the trip.

But sir! The journeys are the only important thing in the story. The marvels of the East, that had never been seen by European eyes—

All right, all right. Don't get all steamed up again. That can all go into the sets and the costumes. Right now it's the story we're working on. Zize saying, the minute he sees this daughter of Kublai——

But sir, she wasn't the daughter of Kublai, was she?

From now on, she is. The moment he sees this dame, they fall for each other. Boy meets girl. That's the first part of the film settled. Now boy loses girl. Who else wants the dame?

I am afraid you've left me behind, sir. I don't understand.

Why is it I have to do everything myself? I'm asking you to think up somebody in the court of Kublai who wants the dame, or at least could of. Somebody fond of dames. .

I think I understand, sir.

Thank God for that. A few minutes back, you were arguing that there's no such thing as a dame. You're learning, sonny. Now what have you?

"There was no handsome female who became the object of his sensuality that he did not contrive to possess, taking her as a wife if she was unmarried, or otherwise compelling her . . ."

That's a little dirty, but it sounds like our man. Who is he?

That was Achmac, a Saracen, one of Kublai's governors.

What happened to him?

The people rebelled and cut his head off.

Oke. Well, this Ahmed makes a play for the dame. Marco fights him, puts down the rebellion, kills Ahmed, saves Kublai's daughter, gets the girl, handsome reward, happy ever after.

But, sir, it wasn't Achmac that rebelled, it was the people that rebelled against Achmac. The man who rebelled against Kublai was Kaidu, and that was at another time.

Who cares. Was this Kaidu a good guy? Well, we'll ring him in on the other side. He's Marco's pal. That finishes it. Boy meets girl, boy loses girl, boy gets girl. That's *The Adventures of Marco Polo*. Same as any other feature.

What about the Travels, sir?

What about them?

If I might venture to point it out, sir, Marco Polo was a traveller.

Do we need to go into all that again?

Well sir, he doesn't seem to have been a lover, or a fighter. His story is all about the people he met, and the places he saw, the mysteries of the East, magicians, cannibals, adulterers, prostitutes——

Say, this is going to be a clean picture. As a traveller he might have been the tops, but he can get in all his licks before the picture starts and after the picture finishes. The story of the picture is going to be Boy Meets Girl. That's the only picture that clicks. It was and it is and it is to come. After this I think we'll make Scott's Expedition to the South Pole. You can start getting the dope on it. Find out who's the dame. Scott and Amundsen are rivals for this dame, and it depends on who gets to the South Pole first. Scott kills Amundsen and wins out. Now get busy on the historical part of it.


# World Film News

AND TELEVISION PROGRESS
(INCORPORATING CINEMA QUARTERLY)

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*The Minsky Burlesque Theatre on Broadway, and (below) a negro girl's night-club strip-tease act. (Pictures by Dorian Leigh).*

# STRIP-TEASE ON BROADWAY

## by Thomas Baird

BROADWAY is one of the few streets in New York which does not run either North and South or East and West. It takes a diagonal stagger across in a north-west and south-east direction. Wardour Street is said to be the only street in the world which is shady on both sides, but Broadway is crooked in its very geography. It is most interesting and most crooked in the Forties and the Fifties. Here is a crazy jumble of theatres; *Victoria Regina* trading on the Coronation, *Richard II* trading on the abdication, and *Lost Horizon* on sublimation. Cinemas jostle with burlesque halls and luxury hotels. It is civilization's biggest gift to the electrical industry. Millions of lights blaze, neon pipes every building, signs flash and dance and stately buildings try to escape the glare by hiding their heads in the clouds. The subways pour their hundreds on to the already crowded sidewalks. Jew jostles Greek, and Chinee nudges Negro. Yellow and red, black and white bathe in the kindly exciting glare of Broadway and are civilised.

RADIO CITY Music Hall is a little way off Broadway but none would dispute that it is a symbol of the Great White Way. It is a picture house but not so as you would notice it. You might be forgiven if you confused it with a cathedral, an art gallery, a hotel, a crematorium or an aquarium. After long wanderings through rest rooms, picture galleries and rooms full of statuary you find yourself in a large cinema. It is perhaps the best place in the world to see a film and as the audience may not smoke the picture is brilliantly clear. This is fine. But as *you* may not smoke you may feel a little impatient with the sanctity of the temple. This can be torture. The seats, however, are extremely comfortable and they would have to be, for once you are inside you are there for a long time.

Item one is an organ solo. Coloured lights amuse the deaf. The fluted roof which slopes down with Gothic grace is bathed in reds and greens and more subtle indescribable nuances such as heliotrope. Soon the organ sinks through the floor and a beam of light falls on the screen from an incredibly far off projector, and time marches through the stately pleasure palace. Just when you are becoming reconciled to the intrusion of the film into this temple the light mixer with his heliotropes and magentas gets to work again to herald the stage show. A symphony orchestra with a hundred performers rise slowly from the pit and move mysteriously back onto the stage. Their opening item is the first movement of Tchaikowsky's B Flat Minor concerto. The orchestra is in position but I can't see the

piano. I run my eye over the hundred musicians but still can't see it. Then it arrives, or rather, they arrive. A hundred men and a girl is all right enough for Hollywood, but Broadway puts on a hundred men and twelve girls. Rising slowly from the pit comes twelve pianos with twelve pianists dressed in twelve blue satin gowns and twelve blonde wigs. I glimpse at my programme and read (what I had missed before) that the solo is to be played for the first time on any stage by twelve pianists. And they did it. And it sounded very good. Trust Radio City.

Then follow the famous Rockettes. A chorus of twelve or sixteen would be lost on the Music Hall stage, so their chorus has to be outsize. There are forty dancers and they are superb. They dance the *Parade of the Wooden Soldiers* and I think back fondly of Balieff and his half dozen. If he turned in his grave that night it would surely be in bewilderment. The forty slaves lacked the piquancy of the Balieff show; they lacked the humour; it was no longer a joke. This wooden soldier business is now a serious affair; the Guards are a poor second best. It is full dress, slick and complicated. Hore Belisha couldn't ask for more.

Just in case some of us are blind we are given some singing. Not a "Drake goes West" baritone or a "Down in the Forest" soprano, but a whole live glee club who for fifteen minutes sing lustily and extremely well. But that's not all. Lest anyone should still suppose that they are merely in a picture palace we are treated to a ballet. A *corps de ballet* of about fifty take the stage. It is probably sacrilege to say that their dancing made the Russian Ballet look silly, but it did. Then for the mob who had merely come to see the pictures the management were good enough to screen *On the Avenue*.

DURING my few months in and around Broadway the ancient and sometimes honourable institution of burlesque saw its end. I witnessed its last two crises. One was its attempt to resist the invasion of foreign talent and the other its attempt to resist the police. Burlesque goes back to the earliest days of the American stage. It was always a step ahead of vaudeville. When vaudeville was daringly displaying the ankle, burlesque was glimpsing as far as the knee. When legs became the fashion in the chorus, burlesque was already the length of bare backs. When variety began to approach the minimum burlesque reduced what had been conceived as the irreducible—it began to cast the veils.

Till then it had produced some great comedians and was roughly the counterpart of the English music hall. It debunked the highbrow and was the home of honest vulgarity. In its latter days it produced no great comedians. Its stars were the strip-tease dancers, sometimes beautiful young ladies who did very little dancing and a great deal of stripping and presumably teasing. The queen of them all was reputed to be Gypsy Rose Lee, whose technique I am assured was something which Salome might have envied. But she had gone to Hollywood and changed her name before I got as far as Minsky's.

It was shortly after her departure that the Minsky Brothers, the then princes of burlesque, began to get worried about the foreign invasion. High-souled American citizens like the Minskys resented the intrusion into a purely American art of foreigners and they were convinced that the great American public shared their view.

The New York "Herald-Tribune" reported the defence of their contribution to the culture of the modern stage in an interview between the Minsky Brothers and the United States Government House Committee on Immigration as follows:

> Sinister foreign competition threatening to debase the "strictly American" art of the strip-tease brought the Minskys down to Washington to-day to ask for legislative protection against the aliens.
>
> Although they disappointed the committee by failing to bring along any demonstrators of the strip-tease the Brothers Minsky were received with all the hushed respect which members of the House of Representatives usually show to eminent men. There were a brace of Minskys, Herbert Kay and Morton; one large, baldish and given to gestures, and the other youthful, natty and selfcontained. As one of their audience put it, their motto was "The Stars and Strips Forever."
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> "It's an American art, strip teasing," cried Morton Minsky, "and we don't want any foreign competition." "American girls are best," said Herbert, and Representative Samuel Dickstein, Democrat, of New York, sponsor of the foreign artists embargo measure, nodded weightily.
>
> With a proud indignation they told of the French Casino whose girl shows are imported from Paris. Such things, they said, should be put a stop to, leaving the field clear for the Minsky and other true exponents of burlesque.
>
> "Why we here in America have devoted seventeen years to developing the strip-tease art," said Morton Minsky. "Not just any girl can do it right. It means she needs rhythm and poise, and looks and harmony, and must choose the exact psychological moment to remove each garment."
>
> "These hard-working young ladies come mostly from the Middle West," added Herbert. "If they have to face foreign competition it's going to be too bad for them. Foreigners come into this country as opera singers and what-not. When they can't find jobs they come to us and try to get work stripping, but Minsky's Oriental sticks with American teasers."
>
> On the whole, Herbert explained, he did not object so much to the importation of opera stars. Brunhildas rarely make good strippers. But such competition as that offered by the young women at the French Casino seemed to him very dangerous. Competition, he said, was unusually bad in the case of burlesque, since burlesque has given employment to many of the vaudeville artists thrown out of work by the motion pictures. As he put it, "Burlesque is the stronghold of flesh on the American stage." He treated the committee to an explanation of how a strip-teaser is made. "They have to be taught rhythm in a manner synchronous with the music," he said with dignity. "In our school they are taught to strip and unclothe by specialists in the atmosphere and lighting of the stage. Strippers have got to be trained and schooled. It isn't just a matter of going out on the stage and taking off your clothes. It requires finesse. Why, you'd be surprised to learn what thought and effort these young ladies put into their work."
>
> The members of the committee smiled with intelligent comprehension, and listened, fascinated, to a Minsky exposition of the history of the strip-tease. The great American art was born, it appeared, at the Winter Garden Theatre in 1922. It was the salvation of burlesque, and such was its appeal to the customers that there are now between 100 and 150 burlesque theatres in the country, all offering the delicate attractions of the strip-tease. Its greatest living exponent, the Minskys conceded, is Gypsy Rose Lee, who was only prevented from accompanying them to Washington and showing the fortunate committee members how real stripping should be done by a handsome motion picture contract carrying a salary of $2,000 a week . . . "

But despite the Minskys' claims for the art I found it a pretty odious business. In the heydays of 1922 when strip-tease was the salvation of burlesque, it may have been different. But in 1937 it was a decadent affair reminiscent of the lowgrade sideshow in a fairground and having little affinity with the traditions of vaudeville or music hall. If the Restoration had a music hall it must have been like this. In the Spring of 1937 the police or the sanitary or somebody stepped in and closed the burlesque houses. The Minskys raised a plaintive cry against the injustice but soon the *Oriental* and the *Gaiety* and the others were dark at nights. Then the Minskys decided to reform and bring back straight vaudeville. Burlesque disinfected was rechristened 'Vaudecue,' and 'Variety' announced: VAUDECUE NEW TAG FOR SAPOLIOED BURLEY, which, in English, means "Vaudecue new name for whitewashed burlesque". It was neither vaudeville nor burlesque but a half-baked effort to borrow from two corpses. Death warmed up does not fare well on Broadway and in a few days the *Oriental* and the *Gaiety* were dark spots in the flood of Broadway's light. Something had marched on.

OUTSIDE a super cinema there is a picket line. A single file procession circles round and round the entrance displaying cards which announce that this cinema is unfair to trade union musicians. Next door a fashionable tailor is picketed—this tailor is unfair to union labour. A few doors up there is a picket outside a cartoon company's office—this company is unfair to union artists. At the entrance to the 42nd Street subway a solitary figure announces that the news stand is unfair to union labour. A fashionable hotel also has a picket—it is unfair to union waiters. A second-rate bar is picketed too. The placard announces that the pub owner is unfair. The barman comes out, speaks to the picket, and hands him a coin. The picket drops his placard against the wall and hurries off down the street. In five minutes he is back and in his hand is a bottle of milk. He runs inside the bar, delivers his errand, picks up his placard and resumes his march. The proprietor of the bar is unfair.

On the face of it, it seems a feeble knock on the gilded doors of Broadway. But the hotels and the cinemas and the others are taking notice. The reappearing pickets are a glimpse of reality, and in their disorder a glimpse of order. A compass line across North-West to South-East, straight across crooked.

# Phony Takes All

*"It doesn't matter that Cagney does not even like to fly . . ."*

EDMUND WILSON is not only a great critic and a good reporter, but one of the most refreshing human beings alive. I think the reason for his excellence in these three separate fields is that he is a moralist. This means that he has a clear and human idea of what is worthwhile and what is ignoble. I mention this because in a recent book review in *The New Republic* he was, like Queen Victoria, not amused. He quoted some lines from Alva Johnston's little book on Samuel Goldwyn as follows:

"Last year was Sam's twenty-third in the movie business; his press department at that time spotted him two years and celebrated the completion of his quarter century in the business. Next year is Sam's real silver jubilee. It is something for everybody to feel patriotic about. The U.S.A. leads the world by a wider margin in pictures than anything else, and one of the chief reasons is the Great Goldwyn."

Wilson added: "Well, I for one will be damned if I will feel patriotic about Sam Goldwyn's silver jubilee, which his agents have already celebrated two years before it was due."

The enterprising boys in the Goldwyn press department might have pointed out that the Mikado of Japan has a birthday whenever it is necessary for political effect. If I am not mistaken, the recent Coronation was set for such a time as would bring in the heaviest commercial returns. I even seem to recall that the birthday of the present King of England has been transferred to a more propitious season. If they can do these things, why shouldn't Mr. Goldwyn anticipate an anniversary? Perhaps two years ago Mr. Goldwyn needed a celebration. It was about that time that he was just getting through with his million dollar tribute to Miss Anna Sten and incidentally was blaming everybody but himself for this expensive disaster. Perhaps the silver jubilee was needed to buck up himself or his exhibitors. It was a trifling deception. It was hardly worth noting. Yet Mr. Alva Johnston noted it and certainly expressed no indignation over it. Perhaps he felt that in comparison with the supercolossal fakes which are perpetrated in Hollywood that this one was legitimate enough. But Edmund Wilson spotted a phony. It seems to me that he spotted a tendency to the phony which is becoming definitely a pest.

I think that I am not as strict a moralist as Mr. Wilson is. I know that my private catalogue of phonies does not depress me with a sense that America is losing its integrity or that our whole social life is being based on lies. These things may be true, but I will worry about them some other time. What annoys me now is the transparent falsehood of these phonies—the attitude behind them that you can put anything over on the American people, the assurance that no one is going

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**He writes here, in an article published by courtesy of 'Esquire', about the "phonies in the movies and in the advertisements on the air . . . They assume that we haven't any intelligence whatever and if we keep on tolerating them, they will be right."**

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to call you on a silly fake, the damnable insult to your intelligence. I have a sort of resentment against them when I see through them.

For instance, in the 'Personal' column of one of the most respected of New York dailies there appeared an advertisement like this:

> MARY.—Although I am fond of you, I must confess that I enjoy dining with Sally in the air-cooled Swiss Room of the Lapland Restaurant on Route 9-A, where Chip's orchestra plays delightful music, the cuisine is perfect, and the company always good.
>
> —HARRY.

That is a phony. Again it is utterly unimportant. Turn on your radio late in the afternoon (Eastern Standard Time) and you will get a baseball report, given out breathlessly, strike by strike and hit by hit and run by run as if the speaker were witnessing the game itself—only much faster and far more interesting. This is on the edge of being phony because the audience knows that the game was played about an hour ago. Only the use of the present tense is artificial and I must say that the total result is far more interesting than certain broadcasts of the Wimbledon tennis matches which were legitimate and terribly dull.

HOWEVER, the business of faking on the air has to be watched at every point. Last winter a famous reporter announced that he was broadcasting from the scene of a flood by candle light because all the power was shut off. (How he got power for the transmission of his voice was not explained.) And then, as I recall it, he shifted to a rescue worker who broadcast from the rising waters themselves and, I think, at times from under the water by virtue of a diving helmet. Every single item of this was a fake. The broadcast was done in the studio under usual studio conditions and the diver stood right beside the speaker. No one was injured by this broadcast financially; only another phony was laid down on the foundation of falsifying the facts.

SEVERAL years ago Walter Winchell and Ben Bernie started a feud on the air. The boys kidded each other and their feud became popular. The fact that some people thought Winchell and Bernie actually detested one another did not make this act a phony. The boys were playing it straight. After that, synthetic feuds developed and they were phonies of the first water. At this moment, the popular thing in radio is to bring a master of ceremonies and a band leader, or two famous Hollywood stars, together at the microphone and have each razz the other. The results are almost passionately uninteresting, not only because the script writers provide nothing witty, but because the atmosphere of a fake hangs over the entire thing.

It also hangs over recent attempts to brighten up commercial plugs in which comedians beg for the privilege of taking the announcer's part just for once. There seems to be an evil conscience about the commercial announcements on the part of the sponsors, so instead of making them simple and honest, they add a pretentious false frankness and the plugs become intolerable.

Perhaps my ancient fondness for the comic strip makes me resent the advertising strip—which is far from comic—more than I should. The only thing phony about them is the rapture in the last picture when the right soap or the right breakfast food has been bought and has worked its miracle of social regeneration. No one gets as glad as that over anything in this world. The thing is a phony.

I don't know where you would draw the line in the movies. The movies are an illusion and the mechanical means by which they achieve their ends are unimportant.

It doesn't matter a bit to me that James Cagney, who is often seen at the controls of an airplane, does not even like to fly as a passenger. This does not matter to me because the fact that Cagney does like to drive rapidly from his home to his studio is also unimportant even when Cagney is shown doing a desperate drive in a truck or a car.

But when it is perfectly obvious that acrobatic substitutes have been used in the dangerous sequences of a picture, it becomes rather silly for the studios to send out press releases of the dangers run by the stars. The press department simply knows that a great many people will take it in—and one more phony doesn't matter. Who loses by it?

I make the rather terrifying suggestion that those who live by phonies are going to die by them. If you think that I am optimistic about it, let me ask one question: how often in the past ten years have you bought anything at a fire sale? Eight of the past ten years have been particularly good ones for "going-out-of-business" sales.

Some time in 1932 I stocked up with some excellent shirts and underwear when a Fifth Avenue haberdasher liquidated. The same haberdasher has gone out of business three times since, but I am now buying what I need from the firms which not only stay in business but do not attempt to deny it. The fire sale phony is the older one and is utterly discredited. The time may come when the other phonies will go the same way.

USUALLY a good trailer is enough to keep me out of the theatre when the original picture comes along, but I cannot always manage this. And so, once I saw a few feet of an episode in which a gentleman was very obviously drawing bedcovers off a young woman in bed. Nothing like that scene actually appeared in the picture. Probably it was censored out after the trailer was made, but nobody made any protest. In fact, no one protests about anything—so long as money is not involved.

It is an illusion of mine that our money is being taken away from us by these little phonies. Some of the forty cents I paid to see the indelicate movie should have been refunded to me. If fifty thousand young women go to see Loretta Young in a picture because they read in a fan magazine that Miss Young—God forbid—reads Plato fifteen minutes every day while standing on her head, they are being gypped out of part of their money. If all these synthetic personalities of Hollywood are fakes, we are paying for the build-ups at the box office. . . .

Still I don't mind so long as I am not too conscious of the phony. I have been trapped by intellectual faking and by political faking as often as I have been trapped by commercial faking. If I did not exactly believe that we would all have to wear tags like a dog's licence plate under the Social Security Act, it is because I am accustomed to the worst types of political phonies in the last days of a campaign. No one expects either honour or intelligence in the week before the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. But the phonies in the movies and in the advertisements on the air are becoming too offensive. They assume that we haven't any intelligence whatever and if we keep on tolerating them, they will be right.

# A BAD EARTH for WOMEN

VERY rarely do the movie men dare to give us a heroine that is deficient in sex appeal. They have done so in *Jeanne D'Arc* and *Mütter Krausen* and *Mother*—but these were made in Europe. Hollywood has now done it with O'Lan in *The Good Earth*.

O'Lan, played by Luise Rainer, is not an important person. She is not outstanding in any way, not particularly brave, not even ugly, just any woman. They make her Chinese.

She is plain, drab, untidy. Her clothes are ill-fitting, her head is bowed, her back stooped. She seldom speaks and her face is for the most part, expressionless. She smiles, I think, twice and it is the merest flicker.

Luise Rainer's performance has been hailed by some critics as the finest of her career. I would call it the finest performance of a female part ever screened. It is better than *Mütter Krausen*, for it goes deeper than a character study. O'Lan is not one woman, but in essence, all women. Whether or not she is a Chinese woman is a matter on which I am not competent to judge.

A materialist, with limitless capacity for work and suffering, without protest or hope. A peasant woman who knows that the soil can provide her with food and must therefore be served and possessed.

The story starts her off as a kitchen slave, marries her to a farmer, gives her poverty and riches and finishes her off in a death-bed scene where, for once, the husband recognises her worth and presents her with two pearls he had formerly given his mistress. These pearls she receives with gratitude and joy. They were part of loot she accidentally found and hers in any case. So, O'Lan is rewarded.

Early in the film O'Lan is shown grubbing in the soil for roots with which to make soup for her family in famine. She finds none and makes the soup of earth. Another time she kills the family ox, a job her husband is unable to do. One wonders why she did not bleed the ox and make it last over a period—a practice known to the crofter women of the Scottish Highlands. But this film is of China and real famine. When the ox is finished and there are no more roots the family treks south,

**The Good Earth,** outstanding January Release Film, has been praised by Campbell Dixon as "one of the loveliest pictures ever seen," and by Frank S. Nugent as "one of the finest things Hollywood has done." Here is an outspoken criticism of the woman character, O'Lan, played by Luise Rainer.

"Luise Rainer has done a disservice to her sex," writes Marion Fraser, reviewing the film from the women's angle. "It rouses the suffragette in me . . . the movies are made by men and it is man's idea of woman that we see on the screen."

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and O'Lan kills her new-born child in order that they may travel. Again, someone tramples on her during a revolution. She survives the agony to find the jewels that restore their fortunes. When they are wealthy her sufferings are not over. She sees her husband bring another woman into the house; her son beaten almost to death and thrown out for making love to the woman; she sees her daughter grow up, an idiot. She is rewarded for all this, however. She is given two pearls.

From the woman's angle if *The Good Earth* proves anything at all it proves that it is a bad earth for the women. I find no fault with the film for this emphasis but Luise Rainer has done a disservice to her sex in letting the shame of it be revealed. There is, however, in her performance an extra touch of masochism which rouses the suffragette and makes me ponder what the films have been doing by way of propaganda for my sex.

The movies are made by men and it is the man's idea of woman we see on the screen. We had in the earlier films two kinds of women, the bad and the good; the former always attractive and spirited, the latter generally insipid and weak. The bad ones knew what they wanted and the good ones knew what their men wanted. The treatment of female parts has not changed very much. Male characterisation has become more realistic and the villain has quite often his good points. But the female characters remain largely in the two original categories.

It seems clear from the movies that women are nearly always beautiful and if they are not they are comic. There seems to be no third way out. The screen is apparently no place for the average woman who works or even for the woman of achievements. The women of the screen seldom work at anything more important than buttering the paws of their employers. They are usually stenographers or manicurists or in some such job of subservience to a superior male. The silent films used to end with the marriage of the heroine and most movies still do, so the woman's traditional job of running a household has had little chance of a screening. The only excuse for pursuing the heroine into married life has been the other woman and her wiles. Married life is dull. To screen it, the directors would be forced to introduce children and unless they are Shirley Temples they are nothing but a pain in the neck. You may have noticed that screen children are usually waifs. The full complement of parents, brothers and sisters, ordinary people doing ordinary things, would require too much ingenuity to make interesting. Much easier to start off with characters that are distinguished: beautiful, comic, abysmally stupid, clever, bad or good—especially if they are women characters.

For the most part the movies have been casual, unimaginative and even flippant with female characterisation. They don't treat us very seriously. So, you see, it is something of an event to have a film like *The Good Earth* and a character like O'Lan.

Despite the fact that the majority of moviegoers are women there has been no protest about this sort of treatment. Indeed we want to forget that we are doomed to the boredom of running households and to enduring the irritation of man's conceit. We want to forget our physical inferiority and the second-rate role that life has allotted us.

When we go to the movies we are not therefore entertained by the O'Lans and their sufferings. We like Garbo when she ensnares but hate her when she renounces. We are mildly interested in the spirited women like Hepburn or Jean Arthur. But it is the vamps we really like for they make the men do the suffering for a change. Mutely sitting by our husbands or sweethearts we go a-man-hunting with the Harlows and Wests and with them lust for the kill.

MARION FRASER.

# TIME, MR. PRIESTLEY, TIME!

*Eileen Beldon, William Heilbroun and Wilfred Lawson in "I Have Been Here Before".*

MR. PRIESTLEY is one of our best craftsmen. His narrative is normally a live document, and in his less sophisticated days his handling of the supernatural was superb. His novels seldom stop their action to philosophise, and he keeps a moving series of particular instances which yield a universal of English working class decency and downrightness. But not the tiresome down-rightness which disallows wonder and fear, for into Bradford could come the Devil to galvanise a Christmas pantomime, and on to Flanders could stagger an awkward squad led by Pistol and Falstaff. While pursuing a line of apparent realism there was always a ghost round the Priestley corners. Even when Jess Oakroyd was almost becoming a humbug debunking the humbugs there was a quite reasonable love of the fantastic in the offing.

Now Priestley has slipped over the edge and is making his drama more out of the stuff of fantasy. It is no longer a sly condition of the story and in *People at Sea* it is the story.

Dr. Johnson once disproved to his own satisfaction Berkley's speculations by kicking his rough shoe against a stone. Ten years ago Mr. Priestley would have kicked a stone and said "Behave tha sen!" To-day there is no stone by his fireside and he wears a slipper ill-suited to stone-kicking. Priestley, who a year or two ago gave us a dramatic picture of real people facing current catastrophe in real places in *English Journey*, now busies himself with faery people who talk glibly of eternity while drifting on nameless seas. We hope that he will again kick a buskin against the stones of the roads of England and bring reality on to the stage again, before the whimsy of Jimsy falls on his robust and unfaery shoulders.

Still it would be wrong to accuse Mr. Priestley of philosophical drama. He is still a story-teller, and those critics who have talked about him turning philosopher either do not know their Priestley or their philosophy. He is not writing about Time; he is writing with Time. It is so obvious that he (along with many of us) has become interested in the experiments of Mr. Dunne. He has told us that this is so. He probably understands Mr. Dunne as well and no better than most of us. What he has done is to realise that these experiments are an indication of the direction of contemporary thought. The science which

# A provocative survey of J. B. Priestley's three plays, **Time and the Conways, I Have Been Here Before** and **People at Sea.**

## Discussing Mr. Priestley's use of the Dunne Time Theory in drama; its effect upon his work and characterisation; "Ten years ago Mr. Priestley would have kicked a stone and said 'Behave tha sen.'"

has bred a generation is fraying at the edges and becoming philosophy—not merely a scientific metaphysics, for through psychology the scientist is being forced into discussing theory of knowledge. How and why do we know? The speculation is in the air. It is in the heart of Eddington's work and it is on the fringe of Jeans'. It is the whole of Dunne and to-morrow it may be in the *Daily Express*. In this Priestley sees drama—and in *Time and the Conways* he tries to see a slice of life as Mr. Dunne, in one of his more perfect experiments, might have seen the Conways. There is divinity in all vision and Mr. Priestley tries to give us a completely divine vision of the Conways. It is the old tragic irony of the Greeks, but it is presented with the philosophical accuracy of our own age.

This does not make Mr. Priestley a philosopher. It does prove him once again to be an expert observer and a skilled reporter. He has forsaken the accepted forms of recording—once he wrote like Hazlitt, then almost like Defoe—and now he records in a framework of his own devising. To say that Mr. Priestley is writing about Time is as ridiculous as to say that *Macbeth* is about ghosts or that *Ghosts* is about hereditary disease. Shakespeare used contemporary supernatural conventions to frame character and action, Ibsen took contemporary social problems to set off play of character, and Priestley takes contemporary theory of knowledge to intensify development and interplay of character.

In *Time and the Conways* this is done brilliantly. The exploitation of the time relations—the playing of the Third Act second and the Second Act third—produces irony and at times terror. The characters become supercharged in their new references. Tchekov once said that drama should be not life as it is, nor life as it might be, but life as it could be conceived in our wildest dreams. Here Mr. Priestley comes near giving us a fearful timeless dream worthy of Tchekov. The theme and characters parallel closely the theme and characters of *The Three Sisters*. There is a similar struggle to freedom and truth. There is the wisdom of simplicity, the terror of half-knowledge and the hideousness of complacency. But somehow or other Tchekov got through to universals. His characters were struggling with powers out of their control. They rose against, or lay down to, Fate, Tradition and Custom. Olga's universe was one of fearful forces predestined to victory. Her nobility was in her hopeless rebellion. Kay's cosmos is just an ill-fitting corset which pinches and chafes and produces discomfort. All Priestley's characters, with the delightful exception of Hazel, while ostensibly struggling with a changing world are merely squabbling with each other or with their own bad tempers. All they are worried about is their own personal discomfort. Given her own way, Olga would have gone to Moscow and started a Revolution; given here her own sweet way, Kay would have gone to London and written for *Time and Tide* instead of the *Daily Express*. Had Fate been more kind there would probably have been more charades and more Conways, and with all the freedom in the world, Priestley's characters would have moved to equally pathetic and ignoble ends with little benefit to either Time or the Conways. Even so, *Time and the Conways* is one of the best current plays. While crying for the moon we should be thankful for a starry night.

*I Have Been Here Before* is almost as successful, chiefly because it is better acted and better produced. I have never seen Mr. Lewis Casson make a mistake. For his acting and production alone the play is worth seeing. Again the reference and source of action comes from the Time theory, but again it is what happens to the people that matters, and there proves to be excellent material for a first-class band of actors. It is a pretty complicated position these characters find themselves in, and they rightly demand an explanation from the Professor. Once or twice his talking hangs up the action, but skilfully Mr. Priestley makes capital out of this by introducing a note of suspense. Each little bit of philosophy introduces a further possibility in the dramatic action and the interest was sustained.

It is difficult to understand why Mr. Priestley should have taken such a nose-dive in *People at Sea*. After *Time and the Conways* and *I Have Been Here Before* his audience was keyed to a fairly high pitch. *People at Sea* was a slow let-down. Reminiscent at its best of better things it is interesting only for one or two coldly isolated pieces of acting. It is unbelievable that Mr. Priestley was just careless. I prefer to think that he was trying to do something extremely difficult and just failed miserably. I believe that after dealing with the dramatic values of super-reality in the other plays he was trying to find similar values in the idea of all being unreal. The veils of Maya are flimsy and they slipped through his fingers in tatters. It is the only explanation that I can find for so disjointed a piece of work. I find myself forced to believe that the lack of unity and the unrelatedness of the characters is done on purpose, and in the hope that the lack of connection, the fortuitous coming and going, of characters who scarcely affect one another will give a feeling of unreality. In point of fact it only produces a baffling dissatisfaction in the audience, and the feeling that the author has written this in an off mood. It was a wise move to change the title so that it has no apparent connection with the other two plays. We hope it will soon be forgotten by Mr. Priestley as well as his faithful audiences. But if the theme still haunts him, perhaps he will kick it down among the real people of the Potteries or the mills of Lancashire, and see what it does to them. It will either die at their hands or bring them to life. If the latter, Mr. Priestley will be more at home guiding them to their destiny.

Thomas Baird

# Way Out West · Comedy

IN the dark backward and abysm of time, before Warners found themselves in the red and staked all on a mammy-singer, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy led separate lives in the grand but chaotic wilderness of the comedy shorts. As a hoary old cinemagoer I remember them—or like to think I do—Laurel as a two-reel star in his own right, and Hardy as an angry foil to Buster Keaton. Then some dear Goddess—or perhaps just Hal Roach—brought them together in that great series of silent two-reelers just before the talkies—the era of the destructive selling of Christmas trees, the voyages perilous on ornamental lakes, and the explosive collisions of the traffic blocks. Sound, which killed Keaton and nearly put the works on Lloyd, swung them to stardom, for they and their directors exploited not merely vocal pleasures but also the infinite possibilities of the Peculiar Noise attached to Ordinary Gesture. The idiom was complete and set; their shorts were manna—*Aerial Antics*, *Laughing Gravy*, *The Music Box* (which I saw seven times and still feel no shame), and many others; and they have now, after several false starts, conquered the feature field.

*"Way Out West," a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film, produced by Hal Roach, directed by James W. Horne, and photographed by Art Lloyd and Walter Lundin. With Stan Laurel, Oliver Hardy, James Finlayson and Sharon Lynne.*

# Release of the Month

On this one had had one's fears, and the partial excellencies of *Fra Diavolo*, *Convention City*, *Bonnie Scotland* and the rest did not allay them. But *Way Out West* is a triumph. In the earlier films counterplots and tenors interfered with the purer aspects of comedy, but here, save for the few opening minutes establishing the toughery of Brushwood Gulch, nothing impedes their steady progress from disaster to disaster.

There is no need to re-analyse their particular characters, which every decent moviegoer knows as well as those of his own family, but one may well note that they are the last of the great gagsters. Everything in *Way Out West* is built up on simple but beautiful gags, most of them probably by Laurel, who is the producer, and is now reported to be supervising Wild Westerns as well (what vistas of future joy!). Gags of incident, gags of dialogue, gags of sound; gags of Keystone vintage and gags brand new from the inexhaustible bowler; the flaming finger, the ritual eating of Hardy's hat, the vast dent in mother earth where Hardy fell from the roof, the vamp tickling Laurel into hysteria, the mule sneering from the bed-room window, the poignant cry of "Oh, me apple," as the golden chain tightens round Hardy's neck, Laurel's apocalyptic changes of voice as he sings the poignant ballad of the Lonesome Pine—all these, and many more, are the life blood of the picture. There is even a continuity gag; for Hardy, divested of all but decent covering in the search for the locket, departs into an inner room and gets dressed in the twinkling of an eye. Film technique, children, can do these things—ask Aunt Eisenstein—but Laurel, unguarded innocent, enquires "How did you get dressed so quickly?" "Never you mind," replies Hardy, sublimely summing up the history of the Avant Garde movement in three pregnant words.

They are indeed, in spite of the meteoric Marxes, the true iconoclasts of the movies, for their technique is exactly that of the highbrows, the pioneers, and the experimentalists. Whether they learn from a viewing of the more specialised films or not, they certainly use the same methods, and only the ineffable Donald Duck can surpass them in the surprises which arise when the more remote possibilities of movie are exploited as simple and everyday incidents. They are, in a way, pretty near to that halcyon period when the question mark formed by Krazy Kat's tail turned into food, a parachute, or a rifle, at will.

LAUREL and Hardy are unique in that the warmth of a surrounding crowd is not necessary for the appreciation of their humour. In the cold solitude of a private theatre one laughs as much, or even more; and one picks up many gems which are lost in the Empire's gale of cachinnation. The intimate crunching noises, for instance, as Laurel chews a portion of Hardy's hat, Hardy's murmured apologies to the ladies as his clothes are gradually removed, and even the finer overtones of Laurel's hysterical laughter, can only be appreciated in complete solitude.

At this point one becomes conscious that one should be writing a criticism rather than a panegyric: but unfortunately in this case they are the same thing. I have no grouch against *Way Out West*, not even as regards the more fantastic "Alice in Wonderland" effects, about which some prosaic souls complain. The appalling elongation of Hardy's neck and Laurel's toe, and the fact that Hardy's head is twisted three times round on his shoulders and then springs back to normal amongst all the music of the spheres, this I take as a part of their routine of perils which raises their martyrdom to philosophical heights.

Nor can anyone complain about the supporting cast, when James Finlayson of the volatile eyes and voluminous night-gown is there to gnash his teeth and wield his alarming blunderbuss, and when a true successor to the lamented Thelma Todd appears in the shape of Sharon Lynne, whose tough femininity is embedded in all the spice and unguents of Arabia. What loyal friends one finds, too, on the credit titles. James W. Horne must now be rated among the big comedy directors, and one notes with joy that Parrott, who directed many of the Laurel and Hardy shorts, brought his brilliance of timing to the writing of the story.

If there is any criticism to make, it can only be couched in a gnawing fear that—like Chaplin and the *Gold Rush*—the great twin brethren can never equal the success of *Way Out West*. It is a film I would choose to see on my deathbed.

**Basil Wright.**

*A Guide to the best films released in January appears on page* 23. **The Good Earth**, *the month's most important film, is specially reviewed by Marion Fraser on pages* 12 *and* 13.

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*An early Madeleine Carroll film of the period.*

# THE SCENE CHANGES

## Arthur Elton describes his early experiences in the Film Industry

OUR so-called civilisation has reached its present peak in about nine hundred years since the Norman Conquest. England has struggled through the quagmires of Mediævalism, through the Reformation, through the Cromwellian Revolution, through the bland eighteenth century, through the agonies of the Industrial Revolution, to its present eccentric heights.

Mirroring this civilisation of nine hundred years, the Film Industry has been through the same agonies in thirty-five years. When veterans of the industry look back to the Hepworth days with affection, it is as if historians had personal recollections of hunting with William Rufus. Historians tell us that through all the upheavals of the last nine hundred years essential human nature has not changed. I do not believe it, but they say so, and historians are always right.

I joined the Film Industry in 1927. By historical comparison, I was a sort of drummer boy with Napoleon. I started in the scenario department of Gainsborough Pictures and shared a room, three storeys up, without any windows, with Angus Macphail and Robert Stevenson. The studio was a retired power station, and had not been very much rebuilt. Our room, once the haunt of electricians, had been Carlyle Blackwell's dressing-room. Blackwell was a man of taste, and he had had it done up like the inside of a Jacobean farmhouse. The work, of course, was carried out by the studio carpenters. It had the lasting qualities of a set: the beams crumbled. A kettle hung on a hook in a sham fireplace, while one burnt one's trousers on portable electric fires. There was no window except a sky-light which opened a few inches. One either had a vertical draught, or dozed in a coma induced by tobacco smoke.

It was my job to read and make notes on possible story vehicles. Amongst other things, I read the novels of Ruby M. Ayres. However, Hugh Percival, who in those days lived in a little glass box downstairs, persuaded the management that the future of the British Film Industry lay in producing the novels of Zola, so I had a happy three months reading them all.

To-day, Hugh Percival is a prosperous figure in the Industry. Nine years ago he was, as far as I remember, assistant casting director, living with, rather than under, a spotlight. He seemed to do everyone's job with good grace, and had aspirations to publish an Encyclopædia on the Negro problem. I hope that in his present production activities he sometimes looks back to those days, for he had a real understanding of the aims of documentary films. But perhaps his successful fictional enterprises have extinguished the flame.

Production was very exciting. One day there was a circus scene, with an elephant. The elephant would go nowhere unless led by a Shetland pony, so both were engaged. They arrived at the studio and immediately fell through the floor. Everyone had a grand half-holiday, and no one was hurt.

Then there was an epidemic of stealing. Money disappeared from trouser pockets in the extras' dressing-room. Two detectives were engaged. At the end of the first evening they both had black eyes. No one knew why.

Hayes Hunter was a director. Everyone liked to listen to him, since when he wanted the action to start, he always said "Camera" at the top of his voice, distinguishing himself from other directors by making the word rhyme with "Carnera".

Later on, I was sent to Germany to try and infuse an English tone into German films for English release. My second assignment was, of all films for a German studio to make, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The studio was a converted Zeppelin shed. Sinister Fritz Rasp played the villain. Each Friday was very exciting, because one knew that the manager of the German firm had been scouring round Berlin during the morning to raise the wind for the salaries.

Carlyle Blackwell was Sherlock Holmes. He was very nice, but only addressed me once, when he asked me why it was that I always looked as though I slept in my clothes. The studio was shattered by wild personal quarrels which led several times to fights. Charming director Oswald, now fired by the Nazis, used regularly to throw his scenario on the ground and jump on it, his patience absolutely exhausted. The Germans had mysteriously rewritten the story, so that there was a good deal of by-play with bows and arrows. Why, I cannot remember. As for the Hound, this was a calf dressed up. Why, no one could explain. At the big banqueting scene—another interpolation into the story—a hundred extras arrived. Someone had forgotten to order the table silver, and the scene could not be taken. Instead of waiting for the table silver, they altered the script and sent the extras away. Such were the days of 1927.

To-day, our glorious industry is a model of efficiency. When I was shooting a few months ago, the Dolly was lost (a Dolly is a cross between a mowing machine and a perambulator, and is used to support the camera). Finally it was discovered built in between set and wall. Before we could start shooting, the set had to be taken down. Perhaps the historians are right. The scene changes but time stands still.

# The Gutter, Gan

## FOUR FILMS

### by

### John Grierson

**Dead End**

A United Artists' film, directed by William Wyler, with Sylvia Sidney, Joel McCrea, Humphrey Bogart, Wendy Barrie and Claire Trevor.

**The Last Gangster**

An M.G.M. film, directed by Edward Ludwig, with Edward G. Robinson, James Stewart, Rose Stradner, Lionel Stander and Douglas Scott.

DEAD END was a serious and successful play on Broadway. It is equally serious and successful as a film. It is beautifully directed by William Wyler, who is not only one of the great directors, but one of the rare two or three whose sense of drama is as adult as his skill. It is profuse in human sympathy as it dives down into the tenements of East Side New York and discovers the teeming tragedy of the poor. What more can we ask? We have challenged the cinema to grow up and take stock of society, and here it does both. We have cursed its dream life and sugar-stick endings. Here is real life and—as one gangster generation dies of its own evil and a new generation is marched off to the reformatory—here is the spondaic ending of honest observation.

Yet, and in spite of watching the film with eagerness and respect, I dislike it intensely and it won't do at all. It is aquarium stuff. It looks at people distantly, like fish, and its sympathy is cold with distance. The poor, poor beggars, are poor; they are uncomfortable; they breed thieves and gangsters and a curse on the conditions that breed them; they struggle against overwhelming odds and what break are they given in achieving the good life? That is the theme and the thesis. It sounds all right; but who was it said that there was more reality in a louse on a dirty bagman than in all this sorrow for the working class? Granted the poverty, the discomfort, the struggle against odds, no slice of humanity is so dim and sad as *Dead End* observes. They laugh and fight and love one another and, except to the sympathisers from without, their dreams of escape are not more important than the rich grip on life they already signify. It is this that *Dead End* misses. It lacks gusto.

Perhaps I am no shakes as a reformer, but I feel a trifle bewildered when I see anæmia made the price of reform. In *Dead End* the heroine, poor dear, wants a cottage in the country away from "all this" and the architect hero, poor dear, feels so savage he could pull down "all this" with his bare hands. Well, I say, let the L.C.C. boys and all such look to that; and they will. But who, except the dramatist and the poet, will see to it that the deeper virtues are not lost in the process? Here, emphatically, there is no contact with these deeper virtues. The poor fish swim round and round with sad eyes and no escape: as though escape were outside, along Riverside Avenue and into the Bronx, and not inside, laughing and loving one another and kicking up hell at injustice and being themselves.

I urge the point because there is one thing the cinema preciously possesses. It began in the gutter and still trails the clouds of glory with which its vulgar origin invested it. But as we ask it to go deep, be sure we are not just asking it to go middle class. And be sure that the next phase of the cinema may not be to eliminate the Cagneys in favour of the Colmans, and indeed to Colmanise Cagney himself. Behind all the arguments about the future of British films there has been an alignment which reflects this fear, and it is far more important for the future than all the divisions over national *v.* international, small films *v.* large. Some of us say the future is where the vitality is, and never mind the art of cinema for the present. We turn from the Korda stuff and the *Victoria the Great* stuff and throw a critical rope to the Will Hays and the Formbys and even if the censor were good, we wouldn't like him on principle. But, see behind that policy the larger question. It would be a pity if we achieved everything and lost our sense of smell.

THE *Last Gangster*, I heard, was just another gangster film and my informant was Sydney Carroll. "Personally I have no use for it", he writes. "It seems to me to pander to a morbid interest in murderers and city thugs and the scenes in which the gangster and his son are put through a sort of third degree are too horrifying for description". Fortunately, I had another and different tipster in O'Brien, scenario chief at M.G.M., and the world's greatest expert on short stories. I was interested to see what he, in high contrast, thought the best M.G.M. film for ages.

Well, this business of being "too horrifying for description" you will have to cut out as no argument at all. So for that matter is the description of the dead in Salammbo and, for a "morbid interest in murderers", your recollection may refer you to Hamlet. The test is surely whether pity goes with the terror and the high resolution of tragedy comes out of the mixture. Gangster film or no, you had better have a close look at this Edward G. Robinson picture for, if my eyes do not deceive me, it is pretty close to the real thing. I shall always count the ennoblement of the maniac in *M* as one of the weirdest and bravest things the cinema has done and the ennoblement of this selfish, arrogant killer in *The Last Gangster* is not different in kind. The basic elements of true tragedy are there. Without letting up on the selfishness, arrogance and evil, here also is courage to make up the human balance. When the film has swung fiercely through the terrors of the gaol of Alcatrez and has tortured the gangster step by step and brought him finally, ashen grey, to his knees, there has been enough of human dignity in the process to make the balance swing not unbeautifully in the sunlight.

I could wish perhaps that Krauss or Lorre or Muni or Laughton had played the part, for Robinson, first rate actor as he is, does not quite make the level of the idea. The film makes a hero of his figure of evil and a not unworthy child of Paradise Lost, but he lacks the subtlety to hold the two elements together. I wish too that the sub-plot in which the gangster's innocent wife flies to the arms of James Stuart and brings up the gangster's son in respectability, were less smarmy. Poor son of a gangster if James Stuart be the alternative and poor Hollywood if this be really the last of the gangsters. It had better dig up a new slice of evil for, heaven knows, it is no good at good.

# gster and Garbo

# REVIEWED

## by

## Basil Wright

**100 Men and a Girl**

A Universal picture, directed by Henry Koster, with Deanna Durbin, Leopold Stokowski, Adolphe Menjou, Alice Brady, Eugene Pallette and Mischa Auer.

**Marie Walewska**

An M.G.M. film, directed by Clarence Brown, with Greta Garbo, Charles Boyer, Reginald Owen, Dame May Whitty and Alan Marshall.

UNSUSPECTING musicians not fully versed in Hollywood's appreciation of music should be warned before seeing 100 *Men and a Girl* that when Deanna Durbin announces she is going to sing *Traviata* she only means a short aria from that opera, and that when Stokowski tells his orchestra to play *Lohengrin* he means the prelude to Act III. All this the general public knows already, so there is no need to belabour this point; and indeed Durbin makes up for it by a highly elaborate description of a Mozart work, inserted as a gag to bewilder a charming taxi-driver who sings bass. Much of the film is based on this instructive snobbery—the snobbery of people who "know what they like"—i.e., the stock bandstand classics, and want to give each other a fictitious sense of uplift. But, note you, the producers are never quite certain. Having purchased Stokowski and his band, and having chosen suitable warhorses, they still feel it necessary to cover up the chariot wheels with comedy gags. In other words, they haven't really had the sense to exploit the real box-office qualities of a great conductor. They do a slight orchestral analysis, similar to the effort by Legg and Walter Leigh on the B.B.C. Orchestra some years ago; but they miss the golden opportunities of showing a real rehearsal, which is not the triumphant playing of a set-piece, but an erratic and interrupted progress from good ensemble playing to better; and what fun that could have been.

But Stokowski (who, by the way, might have ceded the acting honours to a competent stand-in) is by no means the film. There is Adolphe Menjou, as a down-and-out trombonist, and Deanna Durbin as his lively daughter, together with a host of excellent small part players, and the tropical luxuriance of Eugene Pallette. There is also Mischa Auer, poison to some, and in any case with too little to do in this production. The film has plenty of pace, a number of amusing situations, and great gobs of sobstuff at which Durbin is becoming very good, but which Adolphe Menjou, in spite of his careful exploitation of bags beneath the eyes, only eructates with difficulty. The ghost of his performance in *The Milky Way* hovers near enough to lend a sardonic touch to the would-be heart-throb.

The trouble with 100 *Men and a Girl*—but did I remark that the faithful hundred are unemployed musicians whom Miss Durbin, with tears and laughter and grit and luck and a hat with a dear little feather sticking out of the top, welds into a very Wurlitzer of orchestras for the sake of trombonist daddy, and even persuades the great maestro to cancel his European tour to conduct it?—the trouble with the film is that it is so crashingly B.O. that the critical pen crosses a bashful nib before the niagara of ninepences for which it is so surely destined. It has sure gone over big in Iowa, where, according to the "Motion Picture Herald," that Bible of the Box-office, "it seemed to bring out new faces and possibly the better class trade," and that, mind you, in an exceptionally rainy week. Myself, I enjoyed the comics, and was overwhelmed at the technical triumphs of the recording. A new perspective of orchestral analysis is opened up by the elaborate dubbing, which gives to each group of instruments the exact balance that the presentation of the whole work requires. For this alone the film deserves a good mark, while Deanna Durbin's adolescent charm and choirboy voice corner the other honours.

IF it were only that she is so extraordinarily beautiful, and that Karl Freund is such a genius at lighting, one could write off Garbo's performance as *Marie Walewska* in the usual fan terms. But there is so much more to it than the expressive mouth, the smooth frank Scandinavian forehead, and the graceful curves of a neck like that of Egyptian Nefertiti. There is, in fact, a genius which transcends the usual terms of acting and catches the unwary spectator bang in the mid-riff, an ability to identify herself, not just with the part she is playing, but with the universal humanities and our own silly little common denominators which are exactly the most important things in our own lives, an ability, in short, to carry even the banalities of melodrama into the rose-tinted stratosphere of the poetic. It is the genius of a Bernhardt or a Duse, the genius which holds breathless a thousand people waiting for the least change of facial expression, the subtlest alteration of vocal inflexion, and makes a self-sufficient vacuum in the centre of an otherwise ordinary stage cliché.

But there are two other revelations in this film. Firstly, there is Charles Boyer, who, as Napoleon, drives through the part with an intensity and sincerity which matches Garbo herself. And secondly, there is the dialogue, which, in spite of occasional lapses into Ruritanian lushness, really does in content and rhythm match the white-hot fervour of the principal actors.

The film is indeed a dialogue between Garbo and Boyer, and for all the magnificence of the sets, and the occasional spectacular scenes, it is in the intimacies of these two that the film finds its real form. Boyer, as Napoleon, interprets the man of action who passes from idealism (the desire of a peaceful federation of European States) to the dictator mentality, caused by the personal power he gains when trying to impose his ideals by force and force only. The lively vigour with which he presents the internal clash between his personal emotions *qua* Marie and his personal emotions *qua* Emperor is beautifully conceived. Garbo, no less accomplished, gives herself to Napoleon, "to save Poland," half-child, half-calculating female, and then, when she really falls in love with him, lights up with a personal brilliance of feeling which glows around her in happiness and disaster for the rest of the film.

To be conscious of the defects of *Marie Walewska* one would have to divorce it from its two principal players, around whom it is so carefully built. This being impossible, one is left wondering how much credit should go to director Clarence Brown for the unerring psychological accuracy which invests an ordinary costume romance with something of poetry, and much of true humanity. On what happens if you dislike Garbo and Boyer it is not my province to speculate.

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## Some Granada Presentations for January

- Shirley Temple, Victor McLaglen ... **"WEE WILLIE WINKIE"** (U)
- Will Hay, Graham Moffatt ... ... ... **"OH: MR. PORTER"** (U)
- Marlene Dietrich, Robert Donat **"KNIGHT WITHOUT ARMOUR"** (A)
- Irene Dunne, Randolph Scott **"HIGH, WIDE AND HANDSOME"** (U)
- Jessie Matthews ... ... ... ... ... ... **"GANGWAY"** (A)
- George Arliss ... ... ... ... ... ... **"DR. SYN"** (A)
- Paul Robeson ... ... ... ... ... ... **"BIG FELLA"** (U)
- Loretta Young, Don Ameche ... ... ... **"LOVE UNDER FIRE"** (U)

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# The MONTH'S RELEASES

IN the very highest class is **The Good Earth,** with Paul Muni and Luise Rainer. A film based upon Pearl Buck's novel of the same name, and picturising peasant life in China. The small-farmer's never-ending struggle to wrest a living from sun-baked soil, against typhoon, drought and locust plague; catching something of the incredible bravery and patience of these poor-folk—of all poor folk for that matter.

The lives and struggles of real people are the theme of another January release: the heartening-ingly realistic British film **The Edge of the World.** Authentically backgrounded in the Shetland Islands and carrying a simple and enthralling little story about the people there. Deserves your support. The welcome accorded to this picture is an interesting contrast to the less favourable reception accorded to the more pretentious **Knight Without Armour,** in which they make the Russian Revolution look like a Drury Lane Musical. The rest of the film is about the adventures of an upstanding young Englishman, played by Robert Donat, and a high-class Russian lady postured by Marlene Dietrich.

A special word of praise for **A Star is Born,** a picture in colour, but this time the colour isn't

put on to smear over story and acting weaknesses. Here is the film city of Hollywood as it sees itself—and not very nice either. The story of a young girl's rise to stardom is given authenticity and poignancy by the contrasting story of the fall from well-established public favour of her husband. Janet Gaynor acts the rising young film actress easily and pleasantly and Fredric March the falling-star husband with restraint and quiet effectiveness. With first-rate performances by Lionel Stander and Adolphe Menjou, **A Star is Born** is one of the most moving and beautiful films out of Hollywood for a long time.

Amid the riot of comedy to be seen this month, make a point of seeing **Easy Living,** the best of the crazy comedies. With Jean Arthur and Edward Arnold it is a racy and amusing film about a fur coat and a typist. **Way Out West** is the new full-length Laurel and Hardy film, praised very highly by Basil Wright on pages 16-17. **Wild Money** is an Edward Everett Horton picture. Horton blossoms out as a tough guy and succeeds in being as amusing in this role as in his previous role of the mild, exasperated kick-around. There is a great deal of enjoyment in this picture, and in **Cafe Metropole,** with Adolphe Menjou again monopolising the acting honours.

There are no westerns deserving of special mention this month, the month's Hopalong Cassidy—**North of the Rio Grande**—being a bit below the standard of the earlier ones in this series. **High, Wide and Handsome** doesn't come into this class, though it has a few throw-backs to the western. If there had been more movement and more action and less high and low class singing, dancing and loving, it might have been a great picture. Mamoulian is the kind of director who has just the right eye for horses galloping, for waggon wheels digging in the trail-ruts, for men in crowds and in fights, for the pull of the gun and the hard ride of the posse, that are the essentials of the western. But his fancy notions get in the way: there's a long drawn-out business about a home on a hill-top that provides a song and frequent upsets between the hero and heroine; and the discovery of oil on the very spot chosen for the home on the hill-top loses any possible excitement by the determination of Mamoulian to symbolise the significance of it to his married couple by sprinkling the wedding dress and the clothes of the guests with the oil which pours forth. And, throughout, the action is impeded by love-scenes, songs and dances, and a determination to produce some pretty still-life studies. Offhand I can't think of anything that's been left out of this picture—from love to circuses—so if you go to the pictures on the principle that somewhere in the show, sometime, there'll be something you'll like, you might easily find it in this film.

Against this arty anaemia set **Kid Galahad,** a first-rate, full-blooded boxing yarn with Edward G. Robinson and Humphrey Bogart to guarantee tough stuff of the right quality. It shows the shady side of the boxing game and has some unusually realistic fight sequences. The best boxing picture, it is said, since **Patent Leather Kid.** There is a grand free-for-all at the end of **Big City.** This is the story of a taxi-cab war in New York. Not a patch on Cagney's **Taxi,** but there's enough of the old Spencer Tracy left to make this film well worth seeing.

Among the other releases is **Gangway,** the new Jessie Matthews picture. Jessie is as perky as ever but the strong arm stuff in the film—in spite of the able assistance of Nat Pendleton—doesn't ring true, as indeed it seldom does in British pictures. **You Can't Have Everything** features Alice Faye, and the Ritz Brothers working very hard. In the realm of unsophistication there is Will Hay as the railway porter in **Oh, Mr. Porter;** and Charlie Ruggles has an almost straight part in a vigorous newspaper story **Exclusive.**

**The Good Earth** (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer).
*DIRECTOR:* Sidney Franklin
*STARRING:* Paul Muni
Luise Rainer
(Reviewed April and May *W.F.N.*)

**The Edge of the World** (Joe Rock Productions British Independent).
*DIRECTOR:* Michael Powell
*STARRING:* Niall McGinnis
Belle Chrystal
John Laurie
Finlay Currie
(Reviewed Oct. *W.F.N.*)

**Knight Without Armour** (London Films—United Artists).
*DIRECTOR:* Jacques Feyder
*STARRING:* Marlene Dietrich
Robert Donat
John Clements
(Reviewed Nov. *W.F.N.*)

**A Star is Born** (United Artists).
*DIRECTOR:* William Wellman
*STARRING:* Janet Gaynor
Fredric March
Adolphe Menjou
(Reviewed Oct. *W.F.N.*)

**Easy Living** (Paramount).
*DIRECTOR:* Mitchell Leisen
*STARRING:* Jean Arthur
Edward Arnold
Ray Milland
(Reviewed Sept. *W.F.N.*)

**Way Out West** (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer).
*DIRECTOR:* James W. Horne
*STARRING:* Stan Laurel
Oliver Hardy

**Wild Money** (Paramount).
*DIRECTOR:* Louis King
*STARRING:* Edward Everett Horton
Louise Campbell
(Reviewed Sept. *W.F.N.*)

**Cafe Metropole** (20th Century-Fox).
*DIRECTOR:* E. H. Griffith
*STARRING:* Loretta Young
Tyrone Power
Adolphe Menjou
(Reviewed Nov. *W.F.N.*)

**High, Wide and Handsome** (Paramount).
*DIRECTOR:* Rouben Mamoulian
*STARRING:* Irene Dunne
Randolph Scott
Dorothy Lamour
(Reviewed Oct. *W.F.N.*)

**Kid Galahad** (Warner Bros.).
*DIRECTOR:* Michael Curtiz
*STARRING:* Edward G. Robinson
Bette Davis
Humphrey Bogart
Wayne Morris

**Big City** (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer).
*DIRECTOR:* Frank Borzage
*STARRING:* Luise Rainer
Spencer Tracy
(Reviewed Nov. *W.F.N.*)

**Gangway** (Gaumont-British).
*DIRECTOR:* Sonnie Hale
*STARRING:* Jessie Matthews
Barry Mackay
(Reviewed Nov. *W.F.N.*)

**Exclusive** (Paramount).
*DIRECTOR:* Alexander Hall
*STARRING:* Fred MacMurray
Frances Farmer
Charlie Ruggles
(Reviewed Dec. *W.F.N.*)

# REVIEW OF REVIEWS Edited by H. E. Blyth

## *Stage Door*

REVIEW OF THE MONTH

(Gregory La Cava—RKO Radio.)
Ginger Rogers, Katharine Hepburn, Gail Patrick, Adolphe Menjou.

The RKO Radio version of *Stage Door* is not merely a brilliant picture (although that should be enough), but happens as well to be a magnificently devastating reply on Hollywood's behalf to all the catty little remarks that George Kaufman and Edna Ferber had made about it in their play.

Those impolite playwrights, you remember, had filled the mouths of the aspirant Bernhardts of their Footlights Club with gall and wormwood whenever the Hollywood topic arose, which was fairly constantly. It was, we were told, a factory and a graveyard of art, a place of complete untalent and all-pervading witlessness, of sables for the body and starvation for the soul, etc.—all very wittily expressed and neatly packaged (through the courtesy of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer which had backed the show).

For a factory and a graveyard and other unpleasant institutions, Hollywood has done some rather incredible things with the Kaufman-Ferber contribution, not the least of them being the transformation of a fragile piece of theatrical wishful-willing into a far more soundly contrived comedy drama. Script-writers Morrie Ryskind and Anthony Veiller have taken the play's name, its setting and part of its theme and have built a whole new structure which is wittier than the original, more dramatic than the original, more meaningful than the original, more cogent than the original.

Where the team of K & F (who really should have been ashamed) drew Hollywood as the leering man with the waxed black moustache, RKO has countered by showing that the villain of all serious acting fledglings is the Broadway producer who is too busy to look and listen. But with this premise, which was the whole sum of the stage's *Stage Door*, the film edition had only begun its narrative. Back it goes to the Footlights Club where the stagestruck maidens nurse their disappointments and sharpen their claws (on whatever victim is handy) and gossip betimes over the triangular sham battle being fought by Ginger Rogers, Katharine Hepburn and Gail Patrick over and around Adolphe Menjou.

Miss Hepburn (to put this outburst into some sort of order) is the wealthy girl with stage notions and a serious outlook. Miss Rogers is the more realistic type. Miss Patrick has decided to play her producers offstage. Mr. Menjou is the rake who has his better side. Miss Andrea Leeds, the real discovery of the picture, is the tortured young woman who has waited a year for the One Role. There are the other young ladies of the ensemble, and a cleverly individualised bevy they are, whose several destinies tragically or comically counterpoint those of the primary four.

The twists and turns of the narrative are sensibly motivated, the direction of Gregory La Cava has given it zest and pace and photographic eloquence, and the performances are amazingly good—considering that Mr. Kaufman's Hollywood is just a canning factory. Miss Hepburn and Miss Rogers, in particular, seemed to be acting so far above their usual heads that, frankly, we hardly recognised them. A round of curtain calls would demand a bow and smile from Constance Collier, Lucille Ball, Franklin Pangborn, Eve Arden, Ann Miller, Margaret Early and Phyllis Kennedy, among the many others. And now, do we hear a retraction from Mr. Kaufman?

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

"Far above their usual heads . . ."

"Cabaret sequences . . . a show in themselves . . ."

## *Vogues of 1938*

(Irving Cummings—United Artists.)
Warner Baxter, Joan Bennett, Mischa Auer, Alan Mowbray.

The sort of woman who likes to pore over the pages of fashion magazines and dress catalogues, studying plates of "Iris" (soft angora, in rust and mid-blue), "Virginia" (velvet embossed lamé), and "Diana" (model gown in tulle and sequins), will have a lovely time with *Vogues of* 1938. The film is Iris and Virginia and Diana in person, walking and talking, posing and turning, in parades more glittering, salons more spacious, and social gatherings more brilliant than any of us are ever likely to encounter. Like all the best fashion reviews, it is in colour, and the shades are so luscious you feel you could pick them right out of the picture. There are variety turns, too, and some singing, and a hint of drama, but most of the film is just glorious bevies of Iris and Virginia and Diana.

Modom, will you step this way?

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

At the first glance this looks like one for the womenfolk. And it is. But men who dismiss it as a photographed dress show will miss some of the best revue-esque interludes since *The King of Jazz*, a wittily written comedy, Joan Bennett, and easily the best Technicolor yet. Joan Bennett and Technicolor make a theme to linger on. Having met the girl, I knew she was more attractive than the camera had ever made her, but now comes the colour film to do justice to a beautiful subject.

I mentioned *The King of Jazz*. I am prepared to stand by the view that this is the best, most original, most decorative and generally most entertaining musical film since that celebrated milestone in the path from and to the glory of the cinema. The cabaret sequences are a show in themselves and Walter Wanger is to be commended for a production that provides the best all-round night-out available currently in London screenland.

—Stephen Watts, *The Sunday Express*

## *Stand-In*

(Tay Garnett—United Artists.)
Leslie Howard, Joan Blondell, Humphrey Bogart.

When Hollywood decides, as from time to time it does, to turn a quizzical eye upon its own curious activities it shows a commendable fairness of mind and sense of its own shortcomings. In this instance up to a point only, for, overcome by the devastating lines of the portrait-caricature it is drawing, it rubs them out and finishes in the manner of a comic strip. "We don't make pictures, we re-make them!" says someone in this film, and this remark, together with Lester Plum's (Miss Joan Blondell) devastating comments on the habits of film stars, strikes what should have been the key of the whole film, but the true note is heard only occasionally in the discords of exaggerated farce. The acting of Miss Blondell and Mr. Howard, to say nothing of the basic idea of the film, screams aloud for satirical comedy, and what it gets, apart from two or three scenes which are a delight, is the kind of thing that can be done as well by the comic men in the pantomime. Long before Mr. Howard practises ju-jutsu on a Hollywood magnate, hurls a juicy tomato at a bogus director, loses his glasses, and is meant to be terribly funny groping about in a haze of

"Joyous Hollywood fantasia . . ."

short-sightedness, it is apparent that *Stand-In*, brilliant in its infancy, suffers from incurable arrested development.

—*The Times*

*Stand-In* is a joyous and nonsensical Hollywood fantasia. It reveals, but not too closely, the more amusing secrets of the studios, and the chicaneries of film finance. It allows Leslie Howard and Joan Blondell to exercise their muscles, their acting abilities, and their personal charm, all of which are quite considerable. The scene of the continental director demanding real edelweiss amid the artificial snow (one heard the ghostly echo of Donald Duck from *Alpine Climbers*) is one of the prettiest laughs that Hollywood has ever engineered against itself; and the macabre parody of child-prodigies is almost savage in its solemn accuracy.

—Basil Wright, *The Spectator*

*Critical Summary.*

*Since film producers, like punters, believe in following winning form, it is probable that we are in for quite a number of stories, satirical or otherwise, about Hollywood and the lives of the stars, now that "A Star is Born" has proved such a success. Actually the public have never shown any great desire to be shown behind the scenes in the studios—perhaps such stories are apt to bring both them and their idols down to earth with too much of a bump—but whatever the reason this phase will no doubt be short lived. 42nd Street probably provides safer material than the Hollywood Boulevard.*

## Marie Walewska

(Clarence Brown—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
Greta Garbo, Charles Boyer.

If *Marie Walewska* cost the $3,800,000 Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer has said it did, the company was overcharged. For the new film, with all the munificence of its production, with all the starring strength of a Greta Garbo and a Charles Boyer, is merely a surface show. It goes no deeper than the images its screen reflects and we can watch it, and study it, as academically as we would a procession of ants underneath a magnifying glass. Mr. Boyer's Napoleon does not fire the imagination, stir pity or encourage respect; Miss Garbo's Marie Walewska is a creature built upon illogic. We follow the destinies of both with interest, but not compassion; and compassion is all-important in a romantic tragedy.

Clarence Brown has directed this study of Napoleon and his favourite mistress with a splendid eye for detail and an astigmatism for the main fact. The main fact missed is the necessity for a logical explanation of Walewska's surrender to her Napoleonic hero.

Writers, director and cast seem to have been warned repeatedly that *Marie Walewska* was an "important" film. These producer's vapourings, inspired no doubt by thoughts of that $3,800,000 budget, have staled the cast, forced it into a precisely timed, carefully executed series of readings which lack the spontaneity and naturalness one hopes to encounter in a skilled troupe. Miss Garbo seems particularly stilted; Mr. Boyer, with a more clearly defined character to play and with a remarkable physical fitness for the rôle, fares better. His Napoleon dominates Walewska as thoroughly on the screen as he did in fact.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

### W.F.N. Selection.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Stand-In* | * | * |
| *The Last Gangster* | * | * |
| *Dead End* | * | * |
| *Marie Walewska* | * | * |
| 100 *Men and a Girl* | * | |

### *Other films covered in this issue.*

*Stage Door* (Stars reserved)

*Vogues of* 1938

*Triumph*

*Dr. Syn*

*Wife, Doctor and Nurse*

*The Sky's the Limit*

*Abyssinia*

*The Path of the Heroes*

*Club des Femmes*

*Squadrone Bianco*

There are two things to consider about this picture. The first is financial, the second is a lesson in disillusionment, showing that time marches on and all things change—Greta Garbo has had a picture stolen from her. As ever, she is beautiful and fey, and gorgeously gowned by Adrian. But Charles Boyer is the one to watch. His Napoleon is one of the best characterisations to come to the screen this year (there is only Mr. Paul Muni's *Zola* to compete with it). His stature is right, his accent is right, his posture is right, and the magicians of the make-up department have made his nose right, too. He is a thoroughly convincing Napoleon, and if there is any higher praise to accord to a characterisation of Napoleon Bonaparte, of all people, then we'll add it on when we think of it. As a story, *Marie Walewska* reaches no crescendos. As an actor's show-window it is excellent. And the most excellent part of it is Boyer's Bonaparte.

—*Stage*

## Triumph

(Michael Wayman — World Commonwealth Films.)
Anonymous cast.

*Triumph* is a sincere and often beautiful picture, and a real break in the right direction. As Lord Hollenden said, in an introductory speech, it is not necessarily wrong if it departs from nursery picture-book ideas. World Commonwealth Films is on a non-profit making basis, and it has a definite spiritual object—the proclamation that "the secret of strong manhood lies in the values of Christ." *Triumph* sets out not so much to show us One who walked the earth 2,000 years ago as to reveal the power of His spirit all down the ages. The Christ of this film, I think, is too old a man, and the recording of His voice is not all that could be desired. But, "a distinct advance on Oberammergau," was one verdict I heard, and it came from one by whose judgment I set special store.

—Hugh Redwood, *News-Chronicle*

This film is a sermon on Fear and the unconquerable power of Truth. Acted with conviction and great sincerity by an anonymous cast, and most notably by those who play the part of the Disciples, the film first describes several incidents, both Biblical and imaginary, in the life of Christ, and then goes on to show how others, both before and after, have been inspired by His ideal in their search for Truth—Socrates and Joan of Arc accepting death for their convictions, St. Francis of Assisi scorning the world's riches, Leonardo inspired by the ideal to paint his masterpiece, "The Last Supper," and Lincoln working to give freedom to the American slave. The film has been treated with reverence and affection, the desired effects being achieved with admirable simplicity and restraint, so that it remains a devout work and at all times an impressive one, and yet somehow too non-committal and indefinite—a sermon that might have emanated from a secluded country vicarage, far from the hurly-burly of modern life.

—*The Times*

## Dr. Syn

(Roy William Neill—Gaumont-British.)
George Arliss, Margaret Lockwood, John Loder, Roy Emerton.

I wish it was possible to say nicer things about *Dr. Syn*, but veracity forbids. It has a poor unconvincing story of running contraband at Dymchurch, in Romney Marsh, in which George Arliss, as the Vicar, smuggles for the good of the community and the glory of God. In the many previous parts in which I have seen George Arliss he has always been telling and incisive, and often humorous; but as Dr. Syn—and no wonder!—he has lost definition, both as a clergyman with the double life and as a mobile scarecrow. He can believe in the fable no more than we.

—E. V. L., *Punch*

**"Thoroughly convincing Napleon . . ."**

**"Too spry for the villains . . ."**

*Dr. Syn*—continued.

This is harmless schoolboy stuff, a kind of bootlegger story in fancy dress. The Doctor of the sketch, a pastor—the Arliss rôle, of course—has been a pirate in his hey-day, and he is busy now smuggling in his seaside parish. His past overtakes him at last, but he is too spry for the villains who pursue him, and makes an audacious escape. Low-class such things may seem, but Mr. Arliss lends the wicked doings a handsome veneer, wears a peruque with a grand air, and may show even members of the Knickerbocker Club how a gentleman can sail under the skull and bones.

—John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

## 100 Men and a Girl

(Henry Koster—Universal.)
Leopold Stokowski, Deanna Durbin, Adolphe Menjou.

Joe Pasternak, first guide of Deanna Durbin, has done a beautiful job in developing her. She's really the personification of pure, adolescent joy. Stokowski is a very real figure in the film. The theme is highly worthy; the story is original, and adroitly built up. Considering the setting—among unemployed musicians, the tone of the entire piece is extraordinarily gay. And it's not fluff. For one-line satire, it is difficult to think of a movie scene that tops the bit where one millionaire, reading his newspaper, blurps, "This is outrageous!" and the second millionaire automatically drawls, "What have they done in Washington now?" And for sheer pictorial climax, the rag-tag symphony orchestra grouped around the stairwell in the maestro's home is something to remember. . . . A German film about a symphony orchestra won a prize a year ago; Hollywood's entry is an infinitely better story, as well as a better frame for the symphony music.

—Meyer Levin, *Esquire*

What a find this girl is. Her voice, clear, round, mellow, mature, is but a portion of her equipment. She is as natural a player as Gary Cooper. And, if you seek a contrast to her clear-cut acting ability, watch her co-star, the famous Leopold Stokowski, prove his lack of it. Stokowski is a musician, a conductor. His closed eyes and his electric hands are effective only as long as he is in his musical element; as soon as he plays another part he is uncomfortable. Neat, amusing, unexaggerated, this is undoubtedly one of the best films of the year. And it has some grand recordings by the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra and the Durbin voice in songs as different as Mozart's "Alleluja" and somebody's "It's Raining Sunbeams."

—Ian Coster, *The Evening Standard*

*Critical Summary.*

*The cynics of the trade were not long ago prophesying an early relapse into obscurity for two young players who have recently made a sensational entry into films—Deanna Durbin and Sonja Henie. But both, it now seems, are indeed such stuff as stars are made of, for each has made of her second picture an even greater success than her first. The growing popularity of Deanna Durbin and Marlene Dietrich's loosening grip on her public seem to provide a nice commentary on film fashions, and offer a suggestion as to what the film-goer will be demanding from his entertainment in* 1938.

## Wife, Doctor and Nurse

(Walter Lang—20th Century-Fox.)
Warner Baxter, Loretta Young, Virginia Bruce.

At last it's happened. I've been hoping, but not expecting (because I have heard about the British Film Censor and the Hays office) that one of these unhappy triangles would end in a *ménage à trois*. And in *Wife, Doctor and Nurse* I am danged if it does not. You see there is a handsome, hard-working doctor with two lovely women in love with him, his nurse and his wife. At the end of this film the three of them go merrily off, arm in arm—doctor in the middle—and then they all slip on a wet patch of flooring and fall merrily down. Surely that is better than suicide, murder, heartbreak, marrying a staid old somebody else, or any other way out. *Wife, Doctor and Nurse* has the usual background of emergency operations, but most of it is pleasant comedy. And its ending is, well, unique. Miss Young has never looked more lovely, nor has Miss Bruce been more adorable, and it seems to me that Baxter is the luckiest doctor to flaunt hygiene on the screen.

—Ian Coster, *The Evening Standard*

*Wife, Doctor and Nurse* is one of those slick second-rate Hollywood pictures which give innocent delight to millions who don't know the formula, just as any old clock is amazing if you can't imagine what makes it tick. The wife (Loretta Young) is pretty and gay, the nurse (Virginia Bruce) is pretty and useful, with a nice hand for stroking aching temples and a lap the doctor (Warner Baxter) likes to rest his head on when exhausted. And he is exhausted on and off through most of seven reels. Eventually, of course, wife and nurse dispute possession of the doctor. The story ends with their agreeing amicably to share him each after her fashion. Personally, I couldn't learn to care.

—Campbell Dixon, *The Daily Telegraph*

*Critical Summary.*

*In these columns last month comment was made on the way Hollywood has consistently degraded its country's press. Almost as farcical in our eyes, though admittedly far less vicious, is the American hospital. It is, of course, amazingly efficient with its spotless operating-tables, its masked figures, its wonderful equipment and miraculous modern contrivances, but the effect is utterly spoilt by the persistent intrusion, not of germs, but of Love. Surgeons combat epidemics, but are powerless before passion, doctors desire nurses and nurses desire intrigue, while patients repeatedly bring broken hearts, as well as broken limbs, into the wards. The effect of such stories must surely be to shake the public's faith in its medical practitioners, and that is a very serious thing indeed.*

## The Sky's the Limit

(Jack Buchanan and Lee Garmes—Jack Buchanan Productions.)
Jack Buchanan, David Hutcheson, Athene Seyler, Sara Allgood.

There is something about Jack Buchanan. . . . Beyond the endearing drollery, the soft attractive voice, the lazy step-dancing, the hint of fragility, there is an entirely personal quality that eludes his imitators. He can make a feast of enjoyment out of what, on the face of it, is rather thin fare. Athene Seyler and Sara Allgood are among those who help to keep the ball rolling, and Mara Losseff is an animated new charmer in British pictures. But it is the presence of Jack Buchanan that makes this worth seeing.

—A. T. Borthwick, *The News Chronicle*

If *The Sky's the Limit* were a work of art, it would be catalogued as *Scuola Inglese*. In characterisation, tempo, humour and story, it is all very English. Many people will prefer it this way. It would be silly to deny that *The Sky's the Limit* has certain defects—greyness here and there in the photography, a certain shrillness in the recording, and the intrusion of two small boys addicted to reciting their lines. The fact remains that it is the best film Mr. Buchanan has made, and should have a considerable success with the public.

—Campbell Dixon, *The Daily Telegraph*

*Critical Summary.*

*Like Gracie Fields, Jack Buchanan is an artist whose undoubted talents have never been properly exploited on the screen. Lubitsch admittedly directed him with the usual skill in "Monte Carlo", in which Jeannette MacDonald also appeared, but his English pictures have too often been distressing affairs of the inevitable mistaken identity—mildly naughty—man-about-town—pyjama and bedroom type of farce of which "This'll Make You Whistle" was a good example. That he should have been thus engaged on the screen is all the more regrettable when it is considered how very few really personable and talented leading men the English studios possess.*

**"Exhausted on and off for seven reels . . ."**

## *Abyssinia*

(Production: Soyuskinochronika—Russian.)

## *The Path of the Heroes*

(Production: Luca Films—Italian.)

The chatterers, for once, were completely subdued at the last performance of the Film Society. Although coming eighteen months too late for any immediate practical use, the two films *Abyssinia* and *The Path of the Heroes* gave a pretty effective picture of the realities of the Ethiopian conquest. The method of presentation did the Film Society credit. To have shown the two films quite separately might have been tedious. Instead alternate reels of both films were shown in chronological succession. First, reels from the Russian film (*Abyssinia*) showing the primitive life of the country, its people, their agriculture and villages, and then reels from the Italian film (*Path of the Heroes*) showing in detail all the preliminary military preparations for the war. We thus had the necessary background for what was to follow—on the one side a primitive, undeveloped country, devoid of all modern military resources but determined to fight for its independence, and on the other a militarised, totalitarian State intent on destroying the last vestige of that independence.

The last three reels (two Italian and one Russian) could not but create a profound impression. First, the Italian air raids over Abyssinian territory, war planes dropping their cargoes of bombs over defenceless villages, a veritable path for heroes. Then, from the Russian film the actual results of the destruction wrought by the heroes. Villages destroyed and burnt out. Men, women and children with skins burnt by mustard gas. A British Red Cross encampment bombed to pieces. Then the last reel of the Italian film. Cheering thousands in the streets of Rome, and over it the orations of Public Hero Number One, Mussolini.

Technically, the two films were well contrasted. The Russian film claimed to be little more than a newsreel record, shot by two cameramen working under constant difficulties. They have given a straightforward narrative of what they were able to see, and not the least impressive of their material are the close-ups of Abyssinian people, peasants, and soldiers, the men with an impressive and simple dignity, the women often beautiful. Somehow it conveyed a sense of frustration, a people willing to fight but unknowingly doomed to defeat. For its authentic pictures of the effect of aerial warfare on ordinary people the film is worth its weight in gold.

The Italian film was obviously the result of much laboured effort and financial assistance. It omitted no important detail of military preparation and strove so hard to impress the world with the might of Italy's industrial and military machine. The whole film literally swarmed with heroes, heroes leaving Italy on troopships, heroes landing in Africa, heroes digging roads, heroes flying aeroplanes and even heroines tending the happily wounded heroes in hospitals.

To give it its due it did build up a sense of efficiency but in a purely impersonal, mechanical way.

Again congratulations to the Film Society. For once it can claim to have served a socially useful purpose.

—Ralph Bond, *World Film News*

## *Club des Femmes*

(Jacques Deval—French.)

Danielle Darrieux, Valentine Tessier, Betty Stockfield, Eve Francis, Josette Day, Else Argal.

The accident of *Stage Door* opening roughly at the same time with *Club des Femmes*, a French film on a similar theme, together with the further accident of my having seen in the same week with both of them a 1932 film called *Virtue*, arouses me to make some remarks on the subject of censorship. *Club des Femmes* has suffered at the last moment some cuttings and tinkerings which are perhaps ridiculous rather than vicious since they do not obscure the original quality of the whole. The story, briefly, is of a Parisian home for young working women, a home which "protects" them from men a little more than they wish to be protected; more at any rate than one of them does, since she smuggles her boy friend into her room one night and in good time becomes a mother. Jacques Deval has handled the episode with charming taste; but the New York censors have vulgarised it with mendacious subtitles assuring those who cannot understand French that the boy and girl are married, though how even a deaf mute could believe this I cannot guess. Such damage, in other words, is superficial. A graver kind of damage is being done all American films through the fear of General Hays, Inc., lest his native public grow up. I perceived as much rather vaguely while I watched the Menjou-Rogers scenes in *Stage Door*, scenes which were ambiguous because somebody, or rather everybody, had been afraid to make it clear just what was happening to Ginger's character, or whether anything was. But my perceptions were sharpened by *Virtue* which shows how even in five years a glaze of foolish innocence has formed over our screen. *Virtue* was direct and strong as no film can be to-day, and in its thoroughgoing fashion it was wholesome, whether or not it dealt with the lives of prostitutes. We might sacrifice our present safety for at least one such film a year. It would do us good, and it would keep the art as healthy as a sound apple. Most of it now is odourless, being artificial fruit.

—Mark Van Doren, *The Nation*

*Critical Summary.*

*The excessive sanctity of the Hays organisation is becoming a millstone around the producer's neck, for if salaciousness on the screen is no more, cleanliness has been carried to the other extreme, and the powers of the American studios to use the film for social indictment have been sadly curtailed in consequence. Vice, for example, has always been one of the American gangster's basic sources of income, yet how many films which have set out to condemn the gangster régime have been able to even so much as hint at this most loathesome aspect of the crime lord's profession? The classic example of Hays refinement was forthcoming recently: shots of Marlene Dietrich in her bath were sternly censored, but when in "Artists and Models," a girl was seen, apparently naked, in her bath, the sequence was passed as she subsequently stood up and revealed that she was wearing a bathing dress.*

**"Character and chin improve . . ."**

## *Squadrone Bianco*

(Augusto Genina—Italian.)

Antonio Centa, Fosco Giachetti, Fulvia Lanzi.

Crossed in love—and this episode, at any rate, has a Latin exuberance and force—the principal character in this Italian film goes to Africa to shoot, not big game, but rebel natives. The motive, however, is not the right one; they have had too many of these disappointed men in Africa, and when the new lieutenant turns up in the place of a man who loved the work for its own sake he is severely snubbed by his captain. When one observes the captain—he is usually photographed from below, a device which exaggerates the size of the chin but diminishes that of the forehead—it seems unlikely that the lieutenant will ever be his equal, but it is not long before his opportunity comes. An expedition starts across the desert and endures intolerable hardships; all the time the lieutenant's character and his chin improve, until, when the captain is killed, he is able to take his place. Moreover, the treatment is doubly effective; the lieutenant's faithless lady already impressed by his attempt to throttle her before leaving, follows him to Africa, and he has the supreme satisfaction of explaining that he no longer loves her; he has become another man.

The chief merit of the film is in the photography of the desert and of marching camels; there are many extremely impressive scenes but they have the effect of retarding the story and the action.

—*The Times*

Technically, except for a tendency to repeat effects, *Squadrone Bianco* is a first-class example of Italian film-craft. It won the Mussolini Cup at the Venice International Film Exhibition last year. It has an emotionalism that rings extravagantly and with exaggerated emphasis on our colder years; but we can comprehend Rome responding immediately to its patriotic appeal, its musical accompaniment and its wonderful pageantry. We cannot help emerging from this picture asking questions that can never be answered. Why should Imperialism demand of humanity so much apparently worthless sacrifice? What is there in a leafless and waterless desert that induces brave and unselfish men to track down and shoot others just to wave a flag in a breezeless sky?

—Sydney W. Carroll, *The Sunday Times*

# PEOPLE OF THE STUDIOS

## Great Britain

### Denham

And now, after weeks of talk and negotiations and press stories, the Goldwyn-Korda-United Artists deal has fizzled out like a damp squib.

Official reason given is that the deal in its present form might constitute a violation of coporation law and involve payment of heavy taxes in the United States. Real trouble, however, seems to be that since Selznick has decided to withdraw from the company, and Mervyn LeRoy has joined forces with M.G.M. instead of U.A., Goldwyn and Korda are not so sure that the business is worth the £1,200,000 asked by Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks and Charles Chaplin.

Release of London Films' productions continues through United Artists, and plans go ahead without alteration.

With *He Was Her Man* in the cutting room well on schedule, Sam Engel, Fox chief in this country, has been working on a second story for Gracie Fields. Picture will be adapted from Jane Pembridge's short story *Beloved Enemy* (no connection with the Merle Oberon picture of the same name), turning on the rivalry between a music-hall star and legitimate stage actress, and covering the period 1912–1918.

Luis Trenker is back from location shooting on the Matterhorn, and busy on interiors for *The Challenge*, a German version of which is also being made. Trenker was once guide in the Dolomites.

Herbert Wilcox, on returning from America, congratulated everybody concerned on the success of *Victoria the Great* in America—and in the same breath declared that British pictures have never been so scornfully despised in the U.S.A. as they are to-day.

### Teddington

Irving Asher is glowing with pleasure over the success of the musical show *Hide and Seek*, with Bobbie Howes and Cicely Courtneidge. This is the first stage show that Warners have put on, and indicates a growing practice among film companies of backing plays in order to have full screen rights without paying huge sums for successes. *Hide and Seek* will be made at Teddington sometime next year.

Films on the floor are *Simply Terrific*, with Claude Hulbert, Reginald Purdell and Patricia Medina (who graduated to pictures by way of the *Daily Mail* beauty competition), and directed by Roy William Neill; and *Love Insurance*, with Gene Gerrard and Betty Lynne, and Arthur Woods directing. In the cutting room are *Thistledown*, with Aino Bergo, and *The Viper* with Claude Hulbert.

### Elstree

Negotiations for the purchase of Amalgamated Studios are now under way by Josef von Sternberg, financed by French money for the production of features in French and English versions. Von Sternberg failed in an attempt to obtain financing from C. M. Woolf for British quota production, and went to France for the purpose.

Present plans call for the production of bilingual pictures, French versions being made with a French cast but with English technicians. Employment of the latter is cheaper than in France, where unions, the 40-hour-week and technician demands make profitable production more difficult.

In addition to features already scheduled, three pictures will probably be made with Marlene Dietrich following her one-picture Paramount commitment.

Richard Bird has started *The Terror*, with Bernard Lee and Wilfred Lawson. Picture is an Edgar Wallace thriller.

Paul Stein is directing *Sweet Racket*, sophisticated comedy with John Lodge, Gertrude Michael and Fred Emney.

For some weeks Associated British have been on the look-out for a suitable player for the lead in Arnold Bennett's *The Card*. Picture is scheduled for early production.

### Islington

Comparative peace that descended on the Gainsborough studios after the completion of *O-Kay for Sound* is shattered. . . . the Crazy Gang is back for *Alf's Button Afloat*, adaption of the W. A. Darlington story, with the Gang as "the five mighty henchmen of the illustrious owner of the illustrious button," Alistair Sim as the Genii and Wally Patch as the sergeant. Marcel Varnel directs, Maurice Ostrer produces.

> I know nothing about the film world. I don't want to know anything about it, and I hope I never shall.
> —*Lord Hewart.*

Next picture scheduled for the studios is *Convict* 99 for Will Hay.

### Sound City

George King is so pleased with the work on *Sexton Blake and the Master Criminal* that he has taken an option on all the Sexton Blake stories for the next two years.

Triangle Productions are making *Silver Top* for Paramount quota when George King comes off the floor with his present picture. Story is by Evadne Price.

## America

### United Artists

Honours due to Fred Albin, head sound technician at the Goldwyn studio, for the sound effects in *The Hurricane* . . . the sounds created by wind, waves, crashing trees and splintering houses, were produced on the screen by a small machine the size of a midget radio.

Walter Wanger has *The River is Blue*, Spanish story for Sylvia Sidney and Henry Fonda, and *The Arabian Nights*, ready for production. *Wuthering Heights*, for two years on Wanger's production schedule, will probably be put up for sale as the producer is reluctant to make such a sombre story. It is understood that M.G.M. have made a bid for the Ben Hecht script of the novel, and have a cast ready for early production.

Following reports in the American press that electrical advertising space on the Pyramids was to be let, Goldwyn applied to the Egyptian Legation in Washington for rates and conditions. If he acquires the rights to the space, he is to have large neon signs erected to advertise *The Adventures of Marco Polo*.

Publicity sheets from David Selznick's New York office announced that 6,000 years from now *A Star is Born* would be shown to a select audience of future historians. A print of the film has been given to Mr. Thornwell Jacobs for inclusion with other relics in a crypt in the Appalachian mountains—to be opened in 8113 A.D. The news comes as a surprise to Eastman Kodak, the Society of Motion Picture Engineers, the United States Government Department of Archives, Dupont Film, and others who for years have been searching for a formula to preserve film for half a century.

### Paramount

Impressing Paramount executives with his comedy work in *True Confession*, John Barrymore is slated for similar parts in the future. First step will be pairing him off with W. C. Fields in *Things to Happen*.

Franciska Gaal, Hungarian actress, will be introduced to audiences by means of a short built around her discovery by Cecil B. DeMille, her call to Hollywood and subsequent training, and her work opposite Fredric March in *The Buccaneer*.

Mr. DeMille recently made this somewhat surprising announcement: "I have directed bathtub scenes which were influential in changing the ablutional habits and environments of all civilised countries. Inevitably I am identified with the more luxurious bathing fittings, but now the time has come to call a halt. I shall never direct another bathtub picture." Statement was made when people began to wonder how he was going to fit a bathtub scene into *The Buccaneer*.

Frances Dee has the feminine lead in *Marching Herds*, pageant of the reconstruction of Texas. Randolph Scott will play opposite.

Company has a patriotic film on the cards entitled *Millions for Defence*, which will "bring to the screen a drama based on the exploits of Stephen Decatur and the Barbary Pirates who infested the Mediterranean waters after the war of 1812." George Raft, Frances Farmer and Ray Milland are tentatively named for the cast.

### M.G.M.

Said Louis B. Mayer the other day to some friends in Hollywood, after his visit to Europe: "If only every man and woman here, connected with the production of pictures, could see what I saw, lines and lines of people waiting to get into theatres running American pictures—and this in every country you visit—it would make them as proud as it did me to know that they were part of the Hollywood that gives so much entertainment to so many people."

David O. Selznick is now finally set at Metro, where he will have his own independent unit to make ten or twelve pictures over a period of two years. The Selznick-International unit, which formerly released through United Artists, will retain its identity, and yet be able to call on all the

playing and technical talent at M.G.M. Louis B. Mayer has been eager to obtain son-in-law Selznick's services in this direction for some time.

Recent Selznick pictures have been *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, *The Garden of Allah*, *The Prisoner of Zenda* and *A Star is Born*. Previously he made *Viva Villa*, *David Copperfield*, *Vanessa* and *Anna Karenina* for M.G.M.

Mervyn LeRoy will also join the M.G.M. ranks as associate producer after he has finished *School for Scandal* (with Carole Lombard and Fernand Gravet) at Warners. He takes with him a four picture technicolour commitment, and Fernand Gravet, Lana Turner and Vicki Lester, all of whom are under personal contract to him.

Next Robert Taylor picture is taken from Francis Brett Young's novel *They Seek a Country*, story of the great Boer trek in South Africa. Jack Conway, who directed the star in *A Yank at Oxford*, is directing again, with Hunt Stromberg producing. Script is by Noel Langley, author of "Cage Me a Peacock," and "There's a Porpoise Close Behind Us."

Latest Joan Crawford picture in production is *Shopworn Angel*, from a *Saturday Evening Post* story by Dana Burnett.

## Radio

In the May issue of *World Film News* Hugh Walpole pleaded for Radio to make a significant dancing film with Fred Astaire . . . now Radio is negotiating with Romola Nijinsky for screen rights of her biography of Nijinsky for an Astaire picture. After a legal tussle, book rights were relinquished last spring by Alexander Korda, who held them under option for three years.

Hepburn is committed to the cause of comedy in *Bringing Up Baby*. Contrary to the title significance the story is not a domestic one. . . . the baby is a leopard.

Walt Disney now has twenty cartoons in various stages of animation—five Donald Ducks, two Mickey Mouse solo starring vehicles, five with his gang, one with "Goofy" in his first starring role, and seven Silly Symphonies, one of which will re-unite the three little pigs and the big bad wolf. Leopold Stokowski, having made his film debut in 100 *Men and a Girl*, follows it up with 70 *Men and a Mouse*. He has made an agreement with Disney to provide the score, and in some fashion to be worked into the picture.

## 20th Century-Fox

*Thin Ice*, Sonja Henie's second picture, returned £218,000 in the first six weeks of its American release, which means it should cash in a good £700,000 altogether. These grosses certainly justify the faith which Darryl Zanuck had in Miss Henie, and now the young star's popularity is so great that she can forget her skates and do some straight acting. The Fox chief has even suggested that he might team her with Shirley Temple, since he caught Miss Henie teaching the latter how to skate the other day and thought they made a pretty pair.

Meanwhile the latest Henie picture, *Hot and Happy*, is on the way over here. Original title was *Bread, Butter and Rhythm.*

Shirley Temple herself has just completed *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* (made twice before —once with Mary Pickford), and goes straight into *Susannah of the Mounted*, a modern comedy.

The Annabella–William Powell film, promised for so long, has at last been started, and re-titled *The Baroness and the Butler*. Gregory Ratoff has joined the cast, and Walter Lang directs. Other big picture on the floor is *Sally, Irene and Mary*, with Jimmy Durante, Slim Summerville, Alice Faye and Tony Martin.

## Columbia

A joint announcement made by Frank Capra and Harry Cohen, President of Columbia Pictures, states that the differences which existed between them have been settled and the threatened litigation amicably disposed of. Capra has returned to the studios to work on *You Can't Take It With You*, scripted by Robert Riskin who worked with Capra on *Lost Horizon*.

Edward G. Robinson switches back to the right side of the law in his next picture for this company, to be based on the career of District Attorney-elect Thomas E. Dewey. Paul Gallico has been commissioned to write the screenplay, which will concentrate on Dewey's racket-busting activities. This is Robinson's second "outside" picture under his contract which permits him to make two pictures a year away from the Warner lot. His first was *The Last Gangster*. Currently he is engaged on Warners' *A Slight Case of Murder*.

**"Fred Astaire may play Nijinsky . . ."**

## France

First try of the French Government to give its motion picture industry a helping hand has not met with the success that was forecasted when the scheme was brought before the public way back in February.

Idea was that Jean Renoir should film *La Marseillaise*, retracing the French Revolution and showing that the Frenchman was master of his own country, and that the picture, under the patronage of the Government, should be financed by public subscription. A million and a half two-franc shares were issued, and everyone who bought a share was entitled to a reduction on admission to see the film. Practically every known writer, musician, actor and actress in the entire country was to contribute.

In practice, things worked out a little differently. Production under Renoir, as originally planned, was begun, but the whole story was changed and a great deal of the large scale grandioseness omitted. Reason given was that the picture would have been so long that it would have to be run serially. But the truth seems to be that the public subscription was not forthcoming.

Now we hear that a second "national film" is planned on the life of *Molière*.

* * *

*La Grande Illusion*, French film which received one of Italy's highest awards at Venice, has been banned by the Italian Government for release in the country.

For two years, *World Film News* has maintained the purpose for which it was founded: to encourage the creative, the genuine and the progressive in cinema and the allied arts. Because of its independence and outspokenness, it has secured widespread recognition and support and won for itself many loyal friends among producers, writers, critics, artists, technicians, and public men. Its views have been widely quoted in the daily and weekly press and its articles reprinted in film magazines, the world over.

Now its editors are planning an appeal to a still wider audience.

A Good New Year to our readers.

# COCKALORUM

by Rodney Hobson

## 'FILM THE FLOWING BOWL'

*The Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association of Great Britain and Ireland are making a full investigation into the showing of talking films this week at three public-houses in the London area.*

*When their investigations are complete they intend to take action to try to prevent the spread of the tavern-talkies movement.*

*The secretary of the Association told me: "There are ways of stopping this sort of thing.*

*"It is not only for the protection of the film industry that we intend taking action. It is also to maintain the reputation possessed by the industry—that it is disassociated entirely from alcohol."*

*—News Item*

"I say, Ernie, how about a quick one before the trade show?"

"Don't be a beast, Aubrey. You might think of the Industry sometimes, dash it."

"What industry?"

"The film industry. You know, what *we're* in."

"Oh, *that*."

"You know we always try to disassociate it entirely from alcohol. You never see people in films drinking, do you?"

"N-no."

"Well, then. And do you ever see *me* buying a round of drinks? I should say not!"

"I'm sorry, Ernie. It was rather rotten of me. Two grape-fruits, please, Miss. What do you mean—'You know we are' ?"

## News from the East

The habit, prevalent among novelists, of following in the footsteps of Biblical characters, is said to be assuming alarming proportions. Mount Sinai seems to be suffering most from the visitation, and the scribes are still arriving. As a result, a certain amount of professional jealousy has been aroused, and there have been several nasty scenes.

"I say, old boy, I don't think you're quite playing the game. Will you please stop following me around."

"I'm not following you around. I'm following in the footsteps of Moses."

"Well, he went the other way. Just because you gave me quite a decent review on my last book, it doesn't mean to say that you can worry me like this."

"There's no need to talk like that. Anyway, whose footsteps are *you* following in?"

"Shan't tell you!"

"Oh, go on, don't be so *awful!*"

"All right then, I'll tell you if you promise to sit next to me at the next Literary Luncheon."

"I promise."

"I'm following in Aaron's footsteps."

"Do you mean the Aarons who does the book page for the *News-Telegram?*"

"No, the other one."

"I say, don't look now, but there's that chap Ralph who does all that libellous stuff for the weekly magazines. He looks as if he's dancing."

"So he is. He's following in Salome's footsteps."

**"Certainly not, Erica, I'm going to the Odeon"**

## She's No Lady

*Mr. Casper Burr, of Fairfield, Connecticut, owner of a radio and film-star goose which brings him in £50 a week, has—or had—a secret.*

*He discovered that Fanny—that's what he calls the bird—is not a goose at all; he's a gander.*

*Radio and film audiences in Connecticut know Fanny well. Mr. Burr has built the bird up into a female star. To change her name to Horace or Oswald would mean that she would have to start all over again. And the pay would not be £50 a week.*

*Fanny became famous when "she" developed a double chin, and with it an extra loud and sonorous honk. Now radio fans wait eagerly for Fanny's signature tune.—News Item.*

Oh! Fanny, pride of Fairfield, Conn.,
Through all your life you might have gone
A goose, had not your worthy owner
Discovered he had made a boner
When he assumed your sex to be
What's known as "fair" (but not by me).
Come on now, Fanny, show a grin,
And take it on that double chin;
Give up your wily woman's arts,
They'll groom you now for gangster parts;
Forget you've been an *ingénue*,
In future, there's *man's* work to do.
No more will you be seen in bloomers,
Or figure in romantic rumours,
Which link your name in manner murky
With that of some depraved old turkey.
For now, forgetting you were goose,
You'll be allowed to wander loose,
And drink and gabble, swim and swear
With ganders whom you gave the air,
Before you coolly changed your sex,
(And thus reduced your weekly cheques).
And though your owner never knew,
I'm sure those ganders did—aren't you?

But then, with human stars as well,
It's sometimes *very* hard to tell.

**CARGOES** (*with a nautical roll in the direction of John Masefield*)

Stringy little spinster in provincial High Street,
Cycling from the library in the Market Square,
With a cargo of whimsy
By Beverly Nichols
And a book by some man called Havelock Ellis
which the library people
never
knew
was
there.

IN NEXT MONTH'S ISSUE
WHY WE WANT 5,000,000
MORE READERS FOR *W.F.N.*

# BOOBS IN THE WOOD

## Our Christmas Pantomime, by Rodney Hobson

### ACT ONE

*(The scene is an enchanted pine wood near Denham. A number of sets, originally built for Mr. Korda, have been done over to represent a sylvan glade. When the curtain rises two mortals are discovered wandering around the way mortals do.)*

1*st Mortal:* So this is the Enchanted Wood?

2*nd Mortal:* A pretty lousy neighbourhood.
But who is this old doll who marches
Upon the scene on fallen arches?

*Fairy:* I am the Spirit of the Screen,
That's why I look a bit obscene.
You're welcome to this bosky dell—
These wings are chafing me like hell.
*(There is a sound of maniacal laughter off.)*
That's just the Wicked Fairy Slump,
He's always hanging round this dump.
*(Song: "It looks Like Sleet in Dear Old Wardour Street").*
Ah, foolish mortals, have no fear—
I'll show you what goes on round here.
*(She waves her wand and a Fairy Coach enters, pulled by a team of Sacred Cows and seventeen publicity men. The cows are the white ones.)*

*Fairy:* You asked for it, so here you are—
I give you—Fairy Movie Star!

2*nd Fairy:* *I'm* Fairy Movie Star,
Lissom and blond,
Spellbound you are
By my chromium wand.
From all you poor mortals
I manage to snatch
In the course of a year
Quite a nice bit of scratch.

1*st Fairy:* From the belfries of Fleet Street
I now call the bats.
Yes, these are the critics—
These gnomes in black hats.
*(Enter Critics.)*

*Critics:* Oh, we're tough, mighty tough in the Press,
Please excuse these champagne-stains upon our dress.
If you do us well at dinner
We will hail it as a winner,
Yes, we're tough, mighty tough in the Press.

1st *Mortal:* See how they herd round Fairy Star—

2*nd Mortal:* Herd but not seen, ha! ha! ha! ha!

1*st Fairy:* But, hist! who comes upon the scene?
Hey, limelight-man! Turn on the green!

*(Enter trio of directors.)*

*Directors:* We are three Movie Directors—
Ach himmel!
And how!
Mais oui!
Of course, our permits protect us,
Mais vraiment!
That goes
For me!
I'm Pierre from Paris, ziss England's a rum place,
I'm Hank, I'm a Yank and I think it's a bum place,
I'm Herman the German—I had to come *some* place!
Ach himmel!
You said it!
Mais oui!

*(Song: "This Year's Crop of Hisses.")*

1*st Fairy:* Why look—here comes Sourpuss-in-Boots!

1*st Mortal:* Good evening, Pussy.

2*nd Mortal:* Howya, toots?

*Sourpuss:* I'm Sourpuss the Censor-Man,
I'm Sourpuss the Censor-Man,
If anyone tries it,
I quickly excise it,
I'm Sourpuss the Censor-Man.
*(Song: "Where the Blue of the Pencil Meets the Gold of the Script.")*

1*st Mortal:* Now who are these sad-looking stiffs!

2*nd Mortal:* They look like big executiffs.

*(Enter chorus of Bankers.)*

*Bankers:* We are the Bankers who put up the dough,
Put up the dough, put up the dough.
Where it gets put after that, we don't know,
But we've got a shrewd suspicion.

1*st Fairy:* Now, foolish mortals, have no fear—

1*st Mortal:* You've said that once before, my dear.

1*st Fairy:* —just come along and follow me
To our big finale—"All at Sea."

### ACT TWO

*(The scene, for no reason at all, is the bottom of the sea. A number of sharks, whom you all know by name, are circling hungrily around a sunken vessel. This is symbolical of something, but we leave you to guess what.)*

1*st Mortal:* Well, here we are at the Sunken Vessel.

2*nd Mortal:* Don't keep saying what I say, Cecil.

1*st Mortal:* Say, who are all these fishy folk?

1*st Fairy:* Perhaps you'd like to meet them? Oke.

*Voices:* We are the Limpets,
We're ever so glad
To cling to the company
Governed by Dad.

I'm the Hollywood Octopus,
Seeking so slyly
To grasp in my tentacles
Stars you rate highly.

We are the Starfish
And what we like most
Is receiving an offer
To work on the Coast.

We are the Sharks
And we rig the finances.
One day we'll catch
Such a kick in the pances.

We are the Codfish
(The public, you follow?)
There isn't much screen stuff
That *we* will not swallow.

1*st Fairy:* And now to bed, turn down the lights,
Good luck to all—there go my tights.

*(Final Tableau depicting the Death of Nelson, featuring Ernie Fredman, Robert Taylor, Jeffrey Bernerd as the Spirit of Slum-Clearance; Godfrey Winn as the Spirit of Godfrey Winn, Trevor Wignall and the Ovaltineys. Adagio dances by Alfred Hitchcock and C. Lejeune. Closing chorus by the entire Industry: "Nobody's Sweetheart Now.")*

*Curtain*

# THE GENTLE ART OF 'FIDDLING'

by

Edward Carrick

I WONDER if the legislators and financial experts who are working on the new Films Bill, which may mean life or death to the industry and its thousands of British workers, have ever bothered to inquire how the industry is worked behind the scenes at the production heads and distribution centres? That the Government seems determined to do its best to help the British film industry is presumably because the film industry seems to be suffering from some ailment. An inquiry I think would prove that the chief cause of the ailment is *graft*—or what we in the business call "fiddling"—and like another ailment called appendicitis needs immediate operation to save the patient.

I know little about high finance and not much about legislation, but after studying the production side of the film business for the last ten years, I know that whatever form Governmental support may take the multitude of energetic fiddlers who crowd the industry in all its branches are only waiting to take advantage of yet another opportunity for exploitation, so that the film business will read as a "crisis" headline time and time again, until they are eventually exposed.

In 1932 was published the report of an inquiry undertaken by the Commission on Education and Cultural Films. It was composed by Mr. A. C. Cameron and entitled "The Film in National Life". But now a new kind of report is needed, a report made from inquiries *behind the scenes* to show where the money goes once it has been handed over by the rich individuals, the financial organisations and the general public. These three interested groups might even like to find out why there have been little or no dividends on ordinary shares forthcoming from most production companies for so many years, even during what was called the boom period, 1936. Shortly after the prominence given in the press some time back to the financial complications affecting certain studios, we heard that Mr. Crocker of Fire Insurance fame was "on the job" as they say in detective stories, and I, for one, thought that at last there would be a general show up, but so far this has not been the case.

This fiddling is not organized. It works like a species of dry-rot at hundreds of different points right through the industry, fiddling being nothing but a "readjustment of the truth" whether with regard to numbers or facts; it is very difficult to locate, and the speed at which things move at a studio or in a distribution office makes it almost impossible to notice the readjustment unless one is on the look-out. Ask any sincere workers in any section of the industry and they will tell you stories of graft and ignorant waste that will amaze you.

Here are a few instances from which you can judge for yourselves and then try to concoct a Bill that will help the British film industry without increasing the racketeering.

A company working in a very small studio who didn't like being robbed asked their art director to look into their expenses sheets for materials used for production, and to see if prices could not be cut down. While he was working on these costs one night, the gentleman already in charge of the purchase of all materials entered his office in a most melodramatic fashion, and rather gave the game away by saying: "Look here, this place is not big enough for the two of us, so you had better get out before you get into trouble." Actually, I believe, the art director stayed and the other went, as he was able to prove that fiddling was losing the company a sum to the tune of thirty to fifty pounds a week on such items as timber, ironmongery and paints alone.

Here is another tune that a fiddler played. A production company wanted to produce a film. A distribution agent was found to guarantee 60 per cent of the costs up to a certain sum provided they agreed to the story and contracts. The production company then made contracts with all the expensive members of their staff as follows: Your salary, let us say, was £100 a week, but they gave you a contract that said you would get £300 a week. You were then asked to be a good chap and drop them a "private" letter to say you had thought things over and would take £100 in salary and the rest in shares to be payable when all expenses had been paid to production and renting companies. The production company then submitted these fiddled contracts and got its 60 per cent "costs" upon them.

A studio that was letting space to a production company gave their purchasing agent the following instructions: "We need £1,000, so you had better fiddle that in the costs of the producing company who are renting our floor space". And it was duly done. How wasn't it found out? Because the production manager knew nothing about production costs, except actors' salaries on which his time was taken up adjusting contracts to suit income tax returns. The art director having trained as an architect saw the leakage and pointed it out to his directors who took it up with the directors of the studios, and they just got out of it by replying: "These artistic fellows don't know anything about costs". On most productions there is no such person as a quantity surveyor or a clerk of works, so that no proper check can be kept on material used on production. The introduction of

**Fiddling is none other than our old friend graft. Edward Carrick, who has worked as a set designer on many British productions, gives some revealing examples of fiddling and urges an enquiry "to expose the racketeering and inefficiency, which have been the chief causes of the present breakdown."**

honest men to this side of the business would save in some studios as much as 25 per cent and in others 50 per cent of the building costs which sometimes absorbs as much as 10 per cent or more of the whole production costs.

There was another studio where things had been so arranged that the vast supply of timber that arrived daily was not checked "in order to save time and the salary of a man to check it", with the consequence that the companies supplying it made vast sums and the fiddler at the studios "bought" a new car, and later a new house. Of course there is always such a rush during production that these little things cannot be looked into.

There is another amusing story of a man who worked for production company A that used the studios of company B. Company B fiddled the accounts to the extent of some thousands of pounds. The man who worked for A tripped them up and wouldn't pay. Then he was bought over by Company B to prove that Company A was in the wrong, which was easy as he was in possession of all the evidence. So you see from these instances that whatever sum is decided upon as a standard of quality it means that disgraceful advantage may be taken of the Government's aid.

Why do the public laugh or sigh when they see the words British Films? Because, except for a few instances, they are badly conceived and produced from beginning to end. There are only a few artists, technicians and organisers in the business who really know their job; i.e. the art of making a film, large or small, of artistic merit at a reasonable cost, and in an organised businesslike way. These men are so few and so scattered that they are generally swamped by the multitude of unskilled and often totally useless personnel that make up the rank and file of the whole industry; some of them enthusiastic to learn, but with no method of doing so, others placed in jobs they know nothing about by influential people who know still less. The introduction of foreign artists and technicians to make up for our deficiency of knowledge has proved a failure. The foreigner arrives with no intention of teaching us or giving away his tricks during his three months stay, added to which the rush during production makes it impossible to learn anything. There is always a rush in British film studios. There are unending stories of stars being booked before the script is ready, of vast sets being raced ahead for a certain date and then being dismantled because someone had forgotten to mention that one of the chief actors in that set was still on the Continent, of crowds consisting of hundreds of extras being transported to a location without engaging a cameraman to take the shots, and so forth and so on. These blunders made by incompetents in command and the fact that at all unexpected points fiddling is being organised by unscrupulous people in positions they have no right to hold and of whose fiddling I have already given some idea, is the reason why films generally come out costing twenty-five to fifty per cent more than they should and are artistic and commercial failures resulting in financial loss to all except those who have fiddled profits en route.

THE crying need in this country at the moment if the film industry is to be an industry at all and to proft by the work the Government is trying to do to favour its progress, is the immediate institution of a board of inquiry to look into the methods used in every department of the trade, and eventually expose the racketeering and inefficiency which have been the chief causes of the present breakdown. At the same time we must establish an instructional centre, or school, of cinematography which does not only teach the mechanical side, but includes production, economics, direction and the whole art of making pictures. Here, all those already in the business will be able to come and learn their jobs for the first time in their lives. Such a centre could be formed at once round the few efficient technicians, artists, organisers and psychologists who have proved their capabilities and who are at present lost in the multitude of incompetents. To such a centre we should then have good reason to invite foreigners, for they could really come to teach, there would really be time and opportunity to learn from them and nobody would be thrown out of work thereby. This is the only film producing country of importance that has no instructional or experimental centre and our film industry is probably the only industry in the country that cannot be studied at an institute, school or centre, in many cases established specifically for that purpose.

Without this centre we shall be forced to continue to bow to the dictates of the "superior knowledge" of the old stagers who "do as was done before" and who have a warped preconception of "what the public wants" based on unknown statistics handed down from no one knows where.


*Gibson Harris*

PASSING IT ON

## SHORT SHOTS

**More Niterie Notings** . . .
El Gaucho—on old Cosmo premises—grabbing all the studio stay-ups . . . "South American Joe" singing swing song about "Pink Elephants on the Ceiling" and Les Girls . . .Well . . . we won't mention names, but that director will have to change his next opus into a musical to fulfil **ALL those contracts** . . .

★

**Cinematic Losses** on night of Royal Command developing into a big scare . . . expected to boost cine-variety in effort to lure stayins out to pay . . .

★

**Redundancy Roundelay** . . . Deutschland uber Alles.

★

Head Line Dept. . . . .

**Shirley Temple in "A" pictures** . . . We hope that, in Hollywood they spare her Rushes . . .

★

**Bishop on afternoon theatre nudes** . . . Strip Teas . . .

★

**Cause or effect?** Ripley (Believe It or Not) states that Lawrence Tibbet repeats the words **"Blah" "Blah"** again and again in order to relax the muscles of his throat . . . So that's how those Publicists (and one in particular) manage to swallow their own stories . . .

★

**There seems to be a Dispute in**
**Every Aspect on Rasputin.**
**Any further Mitigation**
**By way of Litigation**
**Will make him Virginal and**
**Blushin'**
**As a White Russian.**

If this type of thing amuses you see Gibson Harris' pages in CINEMA MANAGEMENT. Specimen copy 7½*d.* post free :—

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means
Quality

★

*Managing Director*
DONALD TAYLOR

★

# *"Eastern Valley"*

Directed by DONALD ALEXANDER

★

This Film was shown to Their Majesties The King and Queen at Buckingham Palace. It describes a group subsistence scheme in a Welsh valley.

★

*Made with that polished technique and forceful brevity which we have learnt to expect from English documentary directors.* *"The Times."*

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# THEATRE

## ROBERT'S WIFE

MR. ST. JOHN ERVINE'S new play *Robert's Wife* at the Globe, deals with the complexities of individual lives. Robert (Owen Nares) is a vicar, while his wife Sanchia (Edith Evans) is the chief of a birth control clinic. Despite this unconventional blend of jobs, their different ways of looking at life do not interfere with their happiness. Both are idealists, but while Robert is concerned exclusively with the soul, Sanchia believes that if men look after bodies, their souls will look after themselves.

This difference in outlook is expressed in a concrete case: Dick Jones, a boy in the parish, has got a girl into trouble. The method by which Robert and his bishop seek to put the matter right is by joining the couple in lawful wedlock. When Dick's mother points out that the girl is a flighty fool, they hold out the hope that the child will be a link between the couple and that Mrs. Jones will herself come to love it. The two marry, and the child dies. Dick is tied to a worthless woman with nothing to give value to the union. As Robert comments, the clergy are too apt to make marriages and to think their responsibility ends there. Sanchia, on the other hand, in her concern with the health of man's physical life, considers it important that their lives are not made unhappy by the advent of children they do not want.

The main theme of the play, however, deals with the consequences of conflict between the formerly independent careers. Robert has an excellent chance of being appointed dean, but the prospect of promotion is made remote first by Sanchia's job, at which worthy and influential people look askance, and then by the pacifist activities of his son who is imprisoned for exhorting soldiers not to kill. Here again, in the arguments which the bishop brings against the pacifist, Mr. Ervine is not quite impartial. Moses, for example, did not command men not to kill because the Jews were a satisfied imperialist nation with nothing further to gain from killing. This commandment was part of a civil code.

When confronted by the fact that her career may injure her husband's, Sanchia at first believes that, since her work is important, it must nevertheless go on. But Mr. Ervine cleverly robs her of this argument and at the same time gives the play a happy ending by causing Miss Orley, who loves Robert from afar, to give the five thousand pound donation which will enable the clinic to continue. There are people as capable of managing the work as Sanchia is. She is therefore forced to recognise that it is not the desire for the survival of her work that keeps her at the clinic, but her love for the work. She is faced with the choice of whether she will continue with her work at the expense of her husband's career or sacrifice herself for his sake. The issue is now shifted on to a personal basis, to that of love between husband and wife, of whether it is the man or the woman who must sacrifice their life for the other. When it comes to the point, says Sanchia, it is the woman who always sacrifices because she is usually capable of more love, and she herself does so. A play of contemporary interest.

## THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL (Queen's)

The opening scene sets the tone of this production. The heavy plush curtain rises from the box footlights to reveal the transformation of Mrs. Sneerwell from the deplorable sight she is on waking to the raddled, powdered and elaborately dressed grande dame she is in public. Attending her is her bedraggled slut of a maid. Thus is set the fantastic contrast between the surface glitter and basic ugliness, the white ruffle and the dirty neck, which was typical of the times. What a lovely satire this play is, with its exposition of the ethics of immorality and of the philosophy of decadence whereby, as Snake points out in the last act, the imputation of virtue becomes a slander!

With a first-rate cast headed by John Gielgud, production by Tyrone Guthrie, and sets and costumes by Motley, why is it that this version fails to ring the bell? There is a hint of sluggishness and stodginess, despite a gallant striving after the light, crisp touch which the play demands.

John Gielgud's Joseph Surface is a pointed, witty portrait of the precious hypocrite, and Miss Peggy Ashcroft's Lady Teazle is a perfect and delicious piece of work, every gesture exquisitely right. She is as much at home in Sheridan as in Chekov (we shall soon see *The Three Sisters*) and Shakespeare—that cannot be said of many actresses. Good, too, was Mr. Leon Quartermaine's benign and not too senile Sir Peter, and the exotic viciousness of George Howe and Glen Byam Shaw as Crabtree and Backbite.

## GIVE ME GARBO

It was surprising to find that *Queen Christina* by August Strindberg, as presented by the Stage Society at the Westminster, cast no more light on the essential character than the film had done. One's first supposition was that this play is merely Strindberg when his mind was more on chemical experiments than on playwriting. After a promising opening when the characters enter in a fateful procession, as though a scroll of history were being unfolded before our eyes, the play degenerates into a series of skirmishes between Christina and her lovers together with some abstruse and obscure religious discussion. There were some episodes which gripped as Strindberg does at his best. But the manner of production did not indicate that the play was anything more important than the sort of romantic costume drama which might have been written by Mr. Noel Coward. Only after listening to Mr. Graham Rawson, the able translator, at the Stage Society discussion, did one realise that this is as highly concentrated a play as *The Road to Damascus* in which every line is cryptic and significant and that *Queen Christina* accordingly needed a more pointed, deliberate and emphatic production. If we had received such a production, we might have seen more in Christina than a tomboy in jackboots. It was a pity, for the Stage Society has done good work. They will probably be more successful with their next play which is Clifford Odets's *Awake and Sing*.

## THE TROJAN WOMEN

Well produced at the Adelphi for a single performance under the auspices of the League of Nations Union, this production is notable for the magnificent verse into which Professor Gilbert Murray has translated Euripides original and for Miss Sybil Thorndike's clear, strong, untiring intensity as Hecuba. The Chorus was gawky, although the speech of Miss Margaret Leona and Miss Jean Shepheard had clarity and feeling. Miss Margaret Rawlings gave intelligence and life to Helen. Despite a costume which made him look like the Widow Twankey for the *Aladdin* forthcoming at this theatre, Mr. William Devlin's Agamemnon was a convincing, haughty and martial figure, and his verbal duels with Hecuba symbolised the conflict of the Spenglerian and Christian philosophies.

With China and Spain in mind, the indignation against Agamemnon's destruction of women, children and civilisation has a strong relevance to our own times. But one gets tired of indignation which is righteous but impotent. Knowing well how evil war is, we are helplessly making for the precipice and such warnings only irritate us in our seeming incapacity to avert the bloody end.

HENRY ADLER

## MACBETH

IT is difficult to subscribe to a production of *Macbeth* which treats it as a Tod Slaughter melodrama and ignores the vitality of its poetry (one or two cuts were unforgivable) and the important implications of its psychology. One may also enquire, with some pertinence, whether it is necessary to put the witches into comic masks, and give them dolls to drop into the cauldron—anything less like a "birth-strangled babe, ditch delivered by a drab" could hardly be imagined, and was duly received with joyous laughter by the Vic audience. And why should death transform Banquo into a figure from a Nice carnival? And, largest question mark of all, why should the last act, and in particular the battle scenes, be so slipshod that the whole finale of the tragedy becomes low comedy?

After his excellent reading of *Hamlet* one had expected a subtler performance from Laurence Olivier in the name-part; the tendency to rant his way through at all costs was really disappointing in so intelligent an actor, and he was not helped by his make-up, which was in some macabre way vaguely reminiscent of Tom Walls. Miss Judith Anderson gave such a good performance in the sleepwalking scene that one hardly recognised her as the same woman who overstressed the voice and villainy of her part in the earlier acts.

On the credit side come Shakespeare, whose play is good enough to cover up even M. Saint Denis's misunderstanding of the Elizabethan character; the scenery and dresses by Motley, which fitted admirably the tragic mood of the play; and the retention of the Porter's dialogue with Macduff, too often and too arbitrarily cut.

But, on the whole, it is an object lesson in how not to produce *Macbeth*.

BASIL WRIGHT

# LETTERS

### NO PAY—NO SLEEP

*In the advertisement referred to below, by the Cine-Technicians, Mr. Gordon Hales intimated his desire to work in the film industry. Mr. Hales, being young and from Ipswich, inspired by the thought of those Bohemian sufferings, supposedly attendant upon the making of great art, offered to work all day and all night, without sleep or food. It is evident that he is no materialist and is moved by the highest motives. He is in fact the right sort of young man for British producers to apprentice though they would be wise to preserve him from himself.*

*The letter from the Association of Cine-Technicians points out the wider danger. Without realising it, Mr. Hales, and all the young men who are prepared to work without sleep or food, or hours or pay, are doing an injury to organised labour. Artists they may be in spirit, but they may easily become blacklegs, in fact. We apologise for lack of vigilance in letting the advertisement slip through. If at times we emphasise work a little, this is not to say that we are not for wages and sleep.*

*Editor, W.F.N.*

Our first impression on reading Mr. Gordon Hales' advertisement in your December issue was that it had accidentally strayed from the "Cockalorum" page. Apparently this is not so, and Mr. Hales does genuinely wish to become a sort of modern super slave to one of the Moguls in the film industry.

Mr. Hales is willing to "work for any wage, however small, all hours, anywhere." To these inducements he adds that he is "capable of working for exceptionally long hours without sleep or food." He adds that he is extremely intelligent. Doubtless there are employers whose conception of Utopia would be a staff consisting entirely of people like Mr. Hales, but the majority of workers and technicians in the film industry have other ideas.

At the present time no less than 35 per cent of members of the Association of Cine-Technicians are unemployed, with extremely meagre prospects of any immediate re-employment. (Many of them are compelled to utilise whatever gifts they may possess of going without food for exceptionally long periods.) We are very conscious of the fact that with such a large volume of unemployment there is every encouragement for employers to seek to reduce the standards of those still working, and a great proportion of A.C.T.'s activities have been and are devoted to protecting existing wages and conditions and negotiating for agreements embodying improvements.

With all respect to Mr. Hales's desire to enter the film business, surely he can realise that his methods are harmful to every single technician at present employed—and in the long run harmful to his own interests? Collective agreements embodying basic minimum salaries, hours of work and overtime payments, are the rule in every other industry. Why should the film industry be an exception? If Mr. Hales wanted to be an engine driver, would he advertise that he was willing to drive a train twenty-four hours a day, without food or sleep, and for no wages? One could imagine what would happen if he did.

The negotiation of collective agreements between employers and the Unions in the film industry is an urgent necessity. So also is the inauguration of an apprenticeship scheme, for which A.C.T. is pressing. Such a scheme would not only ensure reasonable wages and conditions to the apprentices, but would check the haphazard flow of people into the industry, generally of youngsters with few qualifications other than enthusiasm and unreasoning loyalty, who can be exploited to the detriment of those whose very livelihood depends on the industry.

We trust that Mr. Hales will realise that he is doing a great disservice both to himself and to those many hundreds of technicians who will, perhaps, one day be his colleagues.

REG. BARTLETT,
For the General Council of the Association
of Cine-Technicians.

### W.F.N.'s STARRING SYSTEM

As an enthusiastic admirer and supporter of *W.F.N.*, I claim the right to be a little puzzled at your monthly starring of films. The December issue, for instance gives no stars for *Land Without, Bread* and *Un Carnet de Bal* and one star each for *Angel* and *Spanish Earth*. Elsewhere in the same issue Basil Wright describes *Spanish Earth* as "a great film", yet it ranks as only deserving the same rating as *Angel*. Why? *The Last Night* also has to go out into the world without a single *W.F.N.* star. Is it so much worse than *The Prisoner of Zenda* which gets one star?

One other example. In October *The Edge of the World* is described as "as near as anything a masterpiece", yet rates only one star against two for *A Star is Born*. Maybe you felt the latter film started out with an initial advantage and deserved another one, or is there some other reason? It's all rather mystifying.

RALPH BOND

*As all good critics should, Mr. Bond has obviously worked out his own clear-cut starring system. Ours is different, and works as follows. Three stars for a film that for weight of theme or other outstanding originality is important to the progress of the cinema, and will stay in the memory, e.g., "Zola," "They Won't Forget." Two stars for a film that, while less weighty, has some specatacular quality of brilliance about it—in technique, acting, story or wit, e.g., "A Star is Born" or "Easy Living." One star for the film which, though it has weaknesses, represents some special effort of sincerity or ability. Thus, while three stars becomes a guide to first-rate technique and first-rate subject matter, two stars is a guide to skill rather than weight. A one star film may, paradoxically, have a better intrinsic idea than a two star film, but it will not, on our judgment, have been so good a job of movie-making.*

*On this measuring rule, "World Film News" disagrees frequently with its contributors. Where it often deviates is where personal political interests have coloured a contributor's judgment. We attempt to keep a long term point of view and do not engage ourselves too closely in political excitements.*

*Editor, W.F.N.*

### SUGGESTION FOR EPIC

Mr. Elton has suggested there are epic stories for our films tucked away in the industrial exploits of men like Watt and Stephenson. But how many there are—and not only in industry. Just before reading his article I read this letter in the *Sunday Times* on the subject of Sir Ronald Ross and signed by Lilias Rider Haggard. It is difficult to think there are studios who would know how to dramatise the momentous discovery of malarial cells in the stomach of the Anopheles mosquito, but the record of it appears to have a genuine epic note.

"I have been fortunate in hearing Sir Ronald Ross tell the story. How exhausted, his eyesight affected, impeded in his vital researches by every obstacle known to senior officials, he came at the end of a long, hot day to the dissection of the last mosquito of a batch on which he had built high hopes, and which so far had been a complete failure. Another half-hour's labour for at least the thousandth time—he was very tired and what was the use?

"Then, in his own words, 'the Angel of Fate fortunately laid his hand on my head.' That last mosquito held the ultimate clue—the secret which has saved thousand upon thousand of lives, and in the first flush of that triumphant knowledge he wrote these lines:—

This day relenting God
Hath placed within my hand
A wondrous thing; and God
Be praised. At his command,

Seeking his secret deeds
With tears and toiling breath
I find thy cunning seeds
O million murdering Death.

I know this little thing
A myriad men will save,
O Death where is thy sting?
Thy victory, O Grave?"

J. A.

### BRITISH FILMS, 1915

I recently found among some old papers a copy of the *Daily Graphic* of February 11th, 1915, which contained the following prophetic film review:—

"ALBERT CHEVALIER ON THE FILM."

"In the delightful photoplay production of *The Middleman* by the London Film Company, given for the first time at the Shaftesbury Pavilion yesterday, Mr. Henry Arthur Jones has every reason to thank the producer for a series of extremely vivid and dramatic pictures. . . . A powerful, carefully studied artistic triumph . . . well supported by a clever company. With such sound literary and photographic combinations as these, British producers need have little fear of foreign competition."

Korda and Quota may have been in their cradles—or even not so far—but—*plus ça change*. . . .

BASIL WRIGHT

# NEWSREEL RUSHES

## LAST YEAR'S SCOOP may be THIS YEAR'S CURSE

### "AN INCIDENT"

From the newsreel viewpoint, Armistice Day 1937 had all the usual ingredients of spectacle and universal interest, plus just the little extra something to send its box-office appeal sky-rocketing: AN INCIDENT. Newsreel pictures of the madman's dash and immediate disappearance under a pile of police, varied from a semi-close-up in National News (see below), to an extreme long-shot from a nearby roof-top in Pathé, and shots of the man being dragged away in G.B. and Movietone. Only reel not to include a picture of the incident was Paramount, whose commentator covered the omission by saying: "British Paramount News was far too loyal to break the silence by switching on its cameras!" Little did that commentator realise that his remark would start a train of rumour that has been buzzing through newsreel offices ever since. For perhaps without thinking, in filming the incident, they had in fact bitten their thumbs at a strict government official order.

### OFFICIAL PUNISHMENT ?

Almost all newsreel shots of the Cenotaph ceremony have to be taken from positions in Whitehall, or from the windows or roofs of Government buildings. Weeks beforehand, newsreels must apply for official permits from the Commissioner of Police and the Office of Works. Such permits state clearly that permission to film the service is granted on the express condition that no cameras, sound recorders, or other gear be switched on during the silence, for even the slightest motor purr would be clearly heard by nearby crowds. Unofficially it has long been known that cameramen almost invariably break the silence rule; else they would never have been able to get the annual impressive shots of Whitehall solid with bared heads. But never until now has the Government and police had such incontrovertible proof that the silence had been broken. Hence the question that was being muttered behind newsreel windows: would authority take any action by way of punishment? General opinion seems to be that there will be no immediate kick-back, but when next Armistice comes round, and reel bosses apply for permits as usual, it may be that Paramount will find itself in the happy position of being the only reel with permission to shoot in Whitehall. Then other reels will have to work from Paramount material, or put up with distant shots taken through giant lenses. If that happens, they will realise that this year's scoop can sometimes become next year's curse.

### NATIONAL TRAGEDY . . . LAST ACT

In the up and down world of newsgathering and reporting, each week brings many a sad story. But seldom can there have been such an atmosphere of unrelieved melancholy as that which has surrounded the coming and going of the new newsreel, NATIONAL NEWS. As 1937 drew to a close, the final curtain fell on a tragedy in three acts.

### ACT ONE

The curtain went up last summer with the announcement that longtime Universal Editor Cecil Snape had switched from the reel he had produced for thirteen years, moved under the banner of Chairman Norman Loudon of Sound City Studios (*W.F.N.*, Oct.) A well-handled publicity build-up was climaxed by the first issue of National News in October. Critics set up such a howl about its lack of news and entertainment value, that it was withdrawn from circulation within 48 hours (*W.F.N.*, Nov.) Act One closed with purple lights and a funeral march.

### ACT TWO

Next scene came in November, with the issue of an "experimental" Armistice edition. It included the best picture of any reel of the "madman incident" (see above). But managers who were expected to sign contracts, and particularly Oscar Deutch, whose Odeons were rumoured to be the hidden treasure which National News was trying to pick up, were not impressed. Again production was suddenly stopped. Curtain on Act Two, with a blackout and a death scream.

### FINALE

Act Three was hardly more than an epilogue. On a foggy Monday afternoon a few days later, Cecil Snape called his staff into the recording theatre, broke the news that by the end of the week he and they would be "out". National News might try again in the New Year, but he could make no promises. Those who had left good jobs with other reels, including Snape himself, found there was no going back. All the picture, sound, and re-recording gear were just so much weight in Norman Loudon's pocket.

### MAXWELL AGAIN

Last year canny Scot John Maxwell, boss of Associated British Picture Corp., startled the film world by trying to wrest control of Gaumont-British from the Ostrers. Had the Scot succeeded, he might have seen fit to combine the G.B. and Pathé newsreels into one giant with the world's largest circulation. As things turned out, both G.B. and Pathé continued, backed by Britain's two largest cinema chains, as the deadliest of rivals. Fairly accurate though unofficial circulation reports placed G.B. slightly ahead; though even G.B. remained just behind Universal —holding the newsreel top circulation score. Now, with the news that Maxwell has gained control of the Union Cinemas chain, and pushed it into his A.B.C. circuit, comes a complete swing round in the newsreel circulation race.

### PATHÉ TO THE TOP

For some inexplicable reason, Union Cinemas refuse to disclose how many movie houses are involved in the Maxwell deal; but reliable estimates put the number at between 75 and 100. As fast as present newsreel contracts expire, each of those houses will replace its current reel (mostly G.B.) by Pathé Gazette. By the spring of 1938, Pathé's circulation will have been boosted to the biggest east of the Atlantic; Universal will become second; G.B. third by several lengths. If the latter should find that its profits are so far reduced, that it must cut its coat, set a lower standard from its present pinnacle, it would be a major newsreel tragedy.

**The Commentator.**


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•

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by SCHOOLS, COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES, FILM SOCIETIES and other interested groups. "*The Long Road*" traces the evolution of the internal combustion engine and its fuel.

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Applications, which will be dealt with in rotation, for free use of this film should be addressed:—THE ETHYL EXPORT CORPORATION, Film Dept., Thames House, Millbank, S.W.1, *and should be accompanied by details of the equipment over which it is proposed to show the film.*

# BOOK REVIEWS

### *Film and School*

By Helen Rand and Richard Lewis (D. Appleton-Century).

We are so accustomed nowadays to accepting films as the major visual aid that we tend to forget some of the other media for enlivening the curriculum. This book is a pertinent reminder of these other ways. The authors discuss the place of the school journey, the museum visit, the film, pictures and slides. They show their point of application and throw them against the general education theory thus putting some perspective round their applications. The authors are forced, like most of us, into giving the film a primary place, as it conveniently brings life, movement and action into the classroom. It organises the observation which is unorganised in the school journey or the museum visit.

The book is remarkably well documented and beautifully illustrated. Too often books on visual aids forget to use visual aids. But this is a grand exception. In lay-out and pictures it uses the imagination which alone can make visual aids of real value in the life of the school. Our educational publishers might with advantage give it considerable study.

The technique of picture making is outlined so that an intelligent discussion of the elements will follow. This is the grammar. Then comes appreciation. Films are to be seen and evaluated. Rating scales are outlined so that the children can keep their own records. The picture is first graded in comparison with others seen, and then analysed further by giving credits to the different influences which have gone to the final emphasis of the film. Here the knowledge of the process of picture making and the duties of the various functionaries is a useful criterion.

We doubt whether this kind of technique automatically indicates the best pictures but the scheme must certainly raise in youthful minds the question of why some pictures are as they are. This we take to be a step in the right direction and Miss Rand and Mr. Lewis are to be congratulated. On this side of the Atlantic this book will be most welcome, not as a technique but as an indication of the seriousness with which American educators are viewing the cinema, and the way they are facing up to a discussion of this major influence in young lives.

THOMAS BAIRD

### *The Film Game*

By Low Warren (Werner Laurie, 10*s.* 6*d.*).

For those who have achieved eminence in the respectable professions the evening of life is a busy time. Personal reminiscences must be given to the world before death steps in. Battles must be re-fought, quarter-decks re-trodden, cases re-argued, treaties re-signed. It is an established thing and the second-hand bookshops could not flourish without it. But what is established in the *beau monde* has not necessarily percolated into the turbulent world of the movies. Retrospection in moviedom there has been in plenty, but mostly on the impersonal and learned planes of history and analysis. Movie autobiography is still rare. Perhaps this is because few movie people live long enough to write down their personal experiences; perhaps because those who do can think of more pleasurable ways of spending their hard-earned leisure.

But Mr. Low Warren is an unashamed autobiographer. He muses quietly on a life spent as a pioneer of the British cinema and in so doing he strikes a novel note in film literature. And it is the more surprising that after his hectic experiences as producer, executive, trade journalist and critic he should be able to write so calmly and with such intense good will. For if Flaherty's are the finest eyes in cinema, Mr. Warren's must surely be the benignest. He paints a trade peopled with jovial and upright gentlemen; an industry in which stars shifted sets for the love of their medium, in which world-famous novelists of the '90's sweated their guts to assure the future of a new art. He describes a community in which everyone worked happily together, films made money, and the censor was a splendid fellow.

Wardour Street in those early days must indeed have been a Utopia. There was no blind booking, no redundancy, no patents racket, no inhibitions about production, no libel actions afterwards, no uneasy underwriters, no American market, no television on the horizon. Shareholders were orderly. The Board of Trade was unnecessary. The British film industry was run by British people.

And maybe the pioneers were right. Maybe, if the film industry had continued to evolve from music hall and cockney comedy and the traditional story-stuff of our race these latter-day plagues might never have been visited upon it. And if British audiences had preserved the right of munching peanuts and remaining covered in the ninepennies maybe the pretentious elegancies of our imported directors would be razzed good and proper at source instead of being politely endured.

STUART LEGG

### *Jean Harlow*

By Dentner Davies (Constable. 3*s.* 6*d.*).

This book is a journalistic account of the life and work of Jean Harlow. It contains an impressive assembly of information most of which should interest Harlow devotees. It goes into very great detail and spins out to a fair length with summaries even of the plots of each of her films. The book makes no attempt at profundity and not a great attempt at characterisation. Miss Harlow remains an enigma. There is, however, plenty of material over which the fan may brood. Mr. Dentner Davies is to be congratulated on a respectful and conscientious job.

M. FRASER

### *Off to the Pictures*

Written and illustrated by Frank Reynolds (Collins, 7*s.* 6*d.*).

Mr. Frank Reynolds, the well-known *Punch* artist, has written an amusing account of his reactions to the films, with pertinent remarks on cinema attendants, the actors, the munching, lurching, chattering audience, interspersed with anecdotes on Fleet Street, the local plumber, dogs, gardening and village cricket.

G.F.

### *John Gielgud's Hamlet*

By Rosamond Gilder (Methuen & Co., 5*s.*).

This is a scene-by-scene description of John Gielgud's playing of Hamlet, as recorded by Rosamond Gilder, the New York Critic. To Miss Gilder's record is added notes by John Gielgud himself on the production and costuming of the play and some comments on the "traditional stage business". No new light is thrown on the problems over which commentators have quarrelled for centuries, but the book provides quite a readable companion to the play.

John Gielgud's actual interpretation can perhaps be best contrasted with earlier interpretations by taking a contemporary description of Garrick playing the scene of Hamlet's first meeting with the Ghost, and Miss Gilder's account of the same scene in the Gielgud Hamlet.

Here is the description of Garrick's Hamlet meeting the Ghost:

> "Hamlet is looking away to the left when Horatio suddenly points to the right: 'Look, my lord, look, it comes!' And the Ghost is there motionless before the audience is aware of it. Then Garrick turns abruptly around and at the same time totters backward two or three steps, his knees knocking together beneath him, his hat falling on the ground, his arms . . . almost fully opened . . . he stands . . . as if turned to stone, held up by his friends . . . His face expresses such horror that shudder after shudder runs through one before he begins to speak . . ."

Here is the account of Gielgud's Hamlet in the same scene:

> "His first knowledge of the presence is from Horatio's warning words. The sudden interruption of Hamlet's caged pacing catches the breath. There is an instant of immobility . . . Then Hamlet turns slowly . . . His overwrought nerves for an instant betray him. He whirls away . . ."

There is more than a difference of interpretation here. In the one there is acted horror conveyed so effectively to the audience by stance, gesture and facial expression that "shudder after shudder" goes through the beholder. In the other, the most that the sympathetic anxious-to-be-affected onlooker can record is a catching of the breath. Miss Gilder is clearly uncomfortably aware at times of this great difference between the acting of the past and that of the present: she seeks to explain and excuse it by talking of Gielgud as representative of the "modern generation" and the "Freudian aspects of Hamlet's character."

It is this introspection and neurosia which marked the Hamlet of Gielgud—and explains, too, his success in the part of Richard II—which is the death of drama as a popular force.

No one will ever convince me that it was thus that Richard Burbage packed 'em into the Globe three hundred years ago. In fact tradition argues convincingly otherwise. There is no good drama and no good acting without the groundlings—who now go to the cinema—which may explain why Mr. Gielgud's Old Vic Hamlet of some years ago was a more vigorous performance than the one described in this book.

RICHARD CARR

# BOOK REVIEWS

### *The African and the Cinema*

By L. A. Notcutt and G. C. Latham (Edinburgh House Press, 3*s.* 6*d.*).

To those people who have considered at all the educational possibilities of the cinema it is obvious that no situation contains greater potential results than the instruction of the illiterate, the unalphabetic, the primitive. People who cannot read books, whose attention can be held with difficulty through a long lecture, can follow with ease and interest a talking film (for the superstition that some primitives cannot recognise photographs has never been substantiated by any satisfactory evidence). In theory the talking film has an inestimable value for education, for acculturation, for civilisation, in the extended meaning of the term; in practice the cinema in the tropical countries has either been completely neglected, or abandoned to commercial exploitation tempered by *ad hoc* censorship. For their courageous attempt to break new ground and to provide films primarily intended for the Bantu of East Africa, Major Notcutt and Mr. G. C. Latham deserve the highest praise, and the book in which they describe their experiment from several angles merits the study of all interested in educational and amateur films.

The genesis of the experiment is worth recording:—

> "In 1926 Major Notcutt was managing a group of sisal plantations in East Africa and, like many other planters, thought that an estate cinema might be an effective method to help to maintain a contented labour force. . . . Later, for amusement, he made two or three films with African subjects and actors, and was surprised to find how remarkably attractive those proved to the natives. It then occurred to him that there might be commercial possibilities in the establishment of native cinemas with films of their own. . . .
>
> "Subsequently generous grants were made by the Carnegie Corporation. . . . Financial assistance was also received from the Roan Antelope Copper Mines Ltd., Rhokana Corporation Ltd., and Mufulira Copper Mines Ltd. . . .
>
> "The project was conducted under the auspices of the Department of Social and Industrial Research (of the International Missionary Council) with the friendly assistance of the Colonial Office and the British Film Institute. The experiment was under the general direction of Mr. Merle Davis; Major Notcutt was appointed field director; and Mr. G. C. Latham, formerly Director of Native Education in Northern Rhodesia, accepted an invitation to become educational director."

I have thought it worth while to make this long quotation, for it illustrates a great number of the difficulties which to my mind vitiated much of this experiment and are likely to hamper many similar ones. There is the confusion, which runs throughout the whole book, between the aims of profit-making and education; there is the evident influence of missionaries and European commercial concerns (the objections to these influences are not necessary *per se*, but because they are inevitably external to the natives' cultural lives, and have aims different to those of their audience); there is the astounding naïvety of Major Notcutt in being surprised that natives liked films about themselves; and there is the almost complete neglect of the people for whom the films are meant to be made, except as potentially paying audiences and for performing minor technical jobs.

In two years the unit produced 35 films, consisting in all of 87 reels of 16 mm. film (200 ft. to the film); all except three of the films were accompanied by sound-on-disc; this old-fashioned method was essential because of the variety of languages in which the explanatory commentary had to be given. The films were made at remarkable speed and with extraordinary economy; only occasionally was a scene reshot, and the whole of the processing and editing was done on the spot. The authors say that the technical quality of the films left a great deal to be desired, and the reproduced stills bear out this statement.

Of the 35 films produced 19 were concerned with problems of agriculture, the care and improvement and marketing of land and crops and animal produce; 6 were concerned with questions of health; the remaining ten were a more miscellaneous group, varying between pure entertainment to narrative, and recruiting propaganda for workers in the Geita mine. For any one who does not know the district intimately criticism of the agricultural and health films would be impossible; from the accounts given the majority seem to be well devised and often well executed. It is the more general type of film which is susceptible to criticism, and which shows some highly criticisable features.

I have already mentioned the film which seems to me the most objectionable of the lot. The Geita mine itself may be admirably conducted, but it is notorious that a great number of mines in East Africa are not, and it seems to me a poor service to the African to lure him from his village to a mine-compound by showing the attractions of one well-run mine. The nervousness of administrators and the prudery of missionaries provide some amusing situations. In a film to advertise post office savings a scene was shown of a person burying his savings and being subsequently robbed: "some Europeans objected to the showing of the theft at all . . . they hold that no crime or violence of any kind should be shown." In another film the scenario called for the divorce of a man and his wife and the device was adopted of making the wife a Mahomedan and the hero unintentionally divorcing her owing to his ignorance of custom. "This . . . shows that when sex must be touched on in entertainment films there is no necessity whatever for anything in the least undesirable to be filmed." Unfortunately, when the film was shown outside the area where Mahomedans lived "the point about the divorce was not generally grasped." This same film, *Gumu* illustrated the sort of difficulties which are liable to face the maker of films for natives.

> "First objections were raised to it by the Indian community because it contained a scene in which an Indian trader charged a higher price for the same article to the yokels visiting the town than to a town native . . . . This scene was therefore cut. Secondly, it was objected to by some Europeans because when the two natives were seeking work they were shown interviewing a European who treated his labourers badly. . . . Thirdly the native commentator . . . imitated a European who, although able to make himself understood, did not possess much knowledge of the vernacular. This was objected to by some Europeans, who consider that the planter should have been shown in the best light. . . ."

Apart from the delicate sensibilities of everybody except the intended audience which have to be considered, the chief difficulty of making films for primitive audiences is the smallness of the group which possesses a common background of language, custom, and attitudes. Messrs. Notcutt and Latham are aware of the differences between the detribalised negroes in the towns and mining camps and those still living on their land, but I do not think they reckon sufficiently with the extremely varied cultures of primitive races before European intrusion has destroyed their lives. Unless films deal with subjects (such as European medicine or marketing) outside the traditional native life, a separate version has to be made for each cultural group, or the people and actions will appear foreign to all except the group employed in the making of the film. It is impossible to group Africans or Indians as one can group Europeans who share a common background and culture. For this reason I believe that the suggestion for a Central organisation in London to produce on an economic basis films for native instruction would meet with very great difficulties, especially if they continue the habit of Messrs. Notcutt and Latham of producing their scenarios in consultation with Europeans on the spot, but not with the natives themselves.

Apart from an account of the films made and their reception, the book contains the journal of an exhibition tour (of little interest to people who do not know well East Africa), elementary notes on the production of amateur films, with special attention to tropical conditions, and a theoretical summing up of the situation with regard to films for natives and various recommendations. The chief conclusions that I have reached after reading the book are (1) that it is impossible to make satisfactory films on a commercial profit-making basis for the moment, and that this should not be attempted; (2) that before more films are made it would be desirable to define the aims of the colonisation-education of which the films are a part (certain films showing over-prosperous natives were criticised as having "too much uplift"—really setting up too high a standard of living for the negro to aim at); and (3) that the co-operation of the intended audience should be sought at the beginning of the making of the film and not at the end. If it is desired to help the natives this cannot be done by despising them.

GEOFFREY GORER

## URGES SCHOOL EQUIPMENT

Mr. Kenneth Lindsay, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Education, deplored . . . that only 810 schools out of 32,000 in the British Isles had film projectors, against 17,000 in Germany, 10,097 in the U.S.A. and 9,400 in France.—"Motion Picture Herald."

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# FAREWELL to a NEWS THEATRE

## by Cyril Ray

GREAT fun sometimes, mind you. A good film on the screen, an intelligent notice in the press, a queue at the box-office and your friends cadging free seats. But that's only part of it. There are also the pages being late, the petty-cash book that won't balance, the broken carbon and the jammed tabs, the fourpence short in the stamp account. And silly questions from silly people. Not that some of the silly people aren't rather engaging—I liked the two women who complained that they'd sat in the theatre from half-past two to five o'clock and were still waiting for the big picture.

It's the major annoyances, though, that drive you out of your news theatre. You have to cope with the fact that the same people who congratulate you pompously one week on the "most enlightened theatre in England" (your pardon, Marquis) teeter about your newsreel the next. A pretty justifiable teeter, in all conscience, but they might, you feel, realise that there just aren't any newsreels that aren't lickspittle and worse and that it's very easy to cut that bore Belisha out of your reel but quite impossible to put in its place something that will please them—or yourself. Even if you had the money and the time and the energy and the ability and the directorial permission to go and make your own newsreels of things worth filming you'd find somebody who had a way of stopping you—or of taking your licence from you. The local police may be unable to prevent you doing this or that, but they could always find that you'd more celluloid stored in your projection room than the by-laws allowed or that your box hadn't the right sort of fastener on the door or that your fireman wasn't wearing his badge the right number of inches above his left nipple. I'm not, I hope, doing the police an injustice —I'm merely saying that that is what they could do, that they may be much too decent blokes to think of anything of the sort, but that you daren't, when it isn't your theatre, take the risk of finding out. Anyway, it isn't any use complaining about the newsreels. So long as they're made the way they are for the reasons they are they won't stand up to an honest advertising film—still less to Benchleys, Disneys and the English realists.

Not that these three are all your programmes consist of. There aren't enough adult shorts to go round, anyway, and when the realist people are so keen on preaching to the converted at non-commercial shows that an ordinary box-office theatre can't get a first run, they're even less. (My successor is still waiting for details of the commercial distribution of *Children at School* whilst any school can get a free showing for the asking and some already have.) So you have to fill up with fill-ups and you pluck a renter from the huddle on your doorstep and argue with him about what the fill-ups are going to be. He'll tell you about the entertainment value of the Absolutely-Awful and you'll plead (but not so much that he'll put the price up) for the Fairly-Presentable-if-you're-not-too-Fussy. And the renter polishes his diamond tie-pin and sucks his gold tooth and says, pathetic-like, "Who'm I going to sell the rubbish to if you only take the good 'uns?" and you don't know the answer to that except that if you insist you'll get damn-all. And you book some of the Fairly-Presentable and as few as you can get away with of the Absolutely-Awful. And there's more teetering. And even all that would be relatively tolerable if you and the renters and the public and the shareholders and your directors agreed about which was which. But only you know, and not everyone will listen to you, and two reels of Glorious Technicolor are booked for you as Absolutely-Stupendous and you haven't even the satisfaction of having everyone agree that they're nothing of the sort but only a Dire-Necessity-Because-the-Renter's-a-Friend-of-Somebody.

There's a tradition in the entertainment business that everyone must be pleased and no one offended. (Censors do pretty well out of this one.) Even theatres that can afford to put this blah into perspective or the dog-box still accept it as a way of life or a golden rule or something. And when, because producers and renters are what they are, your programmes are more patchy than any reasonable man can stomach, and you chuck in a few more assortments because there's a man round the corner whose tastes you'd forgotten to cater for, you end up as a theatre with a ragbag instead of a theatre with a policy. Which is all sorts of a pity because a policy is easier to manage, in any case.

Even the most leftward fringe of the exhibiting trade is still not the place for people who find it easier to say no than yes. Only on the hither side of the box-office can you wave the gaily-coloured banner of no-compromise with one hand and thumb your nose with the other.

# PEOPLE WITH PURPOSES

## NEWS NOTES

G.-B.I. are now producing six films for the Religious Film Society. These films are being made in two separate lots—three having a purely religious theme, and three with stories of everyday life; the films are being made on these lines in order to discover which type of film will be most successful in presenting religion to the general public. While these films are intended primarily for showing by religious bodies, it is hoped they will also be successful when exhibited in theatres. *Where Love Is, As We Forgive* and *The Unseen Power* have already been completed. Two more, *What Men Live By*, directed by Vernon Sewell, and *A Modern Story*, directed by Donald Carter, are shortly going into production.

G.-B.I. are now installed in the Lime Grove Studios. In spite of the break caused by moving, activity continues. *The Chick*, a two-releer made by Percy Smith under Professor Julian Huxley's supervision, will be shown in the theatres next month. In the biological field, several films are in the course of production. *Paramecium* which has entailed four years' work is now completed. This film was held up for many months owing to scientific difficulties, and it was only a few weeks ago that its completion was made possible. A film on the embriology of the trout, and one on crayfish, are both ready for showing. Another interesting production is *King Penguins in Captivity*, which has been made with the co-operation of the National Zoological Park of Scotland. Finally, the first batch of the Ecology series has been completed and has proved so successful that this series, started experimentally, will be continued in the 1938 schedule.

* * *

At the G.P.O. Film Unit, Harry Watt has almost finished shooting his ship-shore radio film. Up at Aberdeen last month, Watt was held up at first waiting for stormy weather.

At the beginning of December the Unit and the complete trawler crew started studio sequences at Blackheath on a rocker set representing the after-cabin of a trawler. The crew has now gone back to Aberdeen, and Watt is working on a set representing the interior of Wick Radio Station.

Another film by Watt, *Big Money*, is nearly finished. Patrick Jackson, who took over when Watt went to Aberdeen, has brought the film to the stage of final re-recording.

* * *

Nine films out of a year's production nearing the 80 mark provided only a very tentative cross-section of the work of Sound-Services-Publicity Films-Merton Park Studios when this group held its annual trade show at the Palace Theatre.

They comprised three half-reelers intended for paid showing in cinemas, four one-reelers intended for road-show programmes, one dealer instructional picture and a series of extracts from a Ford "feature" film.

Compression was the keynote of the cinema half-reelers. *Electricalities* crammed the entire manufacturing story of headlamps and batteries into five minutes.

The best work in this field was Dunlop's *Pioneers of Safety*, its high-spot being the sequence with John Tranum making a delayed parachute drop, with nothing on the sound track except the almost unbearable noise of the stop-watch ticking.

Other films included one made for the Bacon Marketing Board, and a new *Mr. Therm* film.

**Cekalski and Wohl's "London through Polish eyes"**

Wohl and Cekalski, producers of documentary films in Poland, are visiting England now. They have brought with them several of their recent productions including three studies set to the music of Chopin, which were shown at the Venice Festival this year.

Wohl and Cekalski are members of the Association of Short Film Producers in Poland, and it is through this organisation that all documentary shorts are distributed.

Two of their productions, *Danger* and the Chopin Film, were recently shown to the press, and were received with great interest.

* * *

The new film on *Scotland To-day*, to be produced by the Realist Film Unit, is a survey of every aspect of Scottish life with a special emphasis on the people, and will be directed by John Taylor. It is one of a series of films being made about Scottish life for presentation at the Glasgow Exhibition.

* * *

The Canadian Government have been shooting scenes for a film on apple-packing. They are for inclusion in a film to be completed in Canada and were supervised by Mr. W. B. Gornell, Fruit Trade Commissioner.

* * *

C. K. Sachi, the Indian Film Director, has recently returned to India where he will start production on five films dealing with different aspects of Indian life.

* * *

At present the Strand Film Co. have more than twenty-four subjects in various stages of production.

*The Future's in the Air* dealing with the Empire air routes, *Five Faces*, dramatising the historical and modern aspects of that little known corner of the Empire, Malay, and *Watch and Ward of the Air*, entailed a journey of 34,000 miles for a unit headed by Alexander Shaw, Ralph Keene and John Taylor.

Other films made on this expedition include *Dancing Islands*, a story of Bali, *Rosevale Ranch* which has an Australian setting, and *Air Outpost* which was produced on the Persian Gulf.

Other directors of the company have been working on a series of zoological films, *Animal Kingdom*, at Regent's Park and Whipsnade, under the supervision of Professor Julian Huxley. Six of the series of twelve have been completed and will be ready for release by Associated British Film Distributors early in the New Year.

The series will include such varied subjects as *Animal Geography*, directed by Ralph Bond, *Size and Weight*, directed by Donald Alexander, *Animals Looking at You*, directed by R. I. Grierson with Mabel Constanduros, *Wild Babies*, directed by Evelyn Spice, *Whipsnade Freedom*, directed by Paul Burnford, and *Monkey into Man*, directed by Stanley Hawes.

South Wales was the venue of another Strand director, Donald Alexander, who has produced *Eastern Valley*, a documentary dealing with the self-supporting industrial and agricultural centre which is run entirely by unemployed.

Yet another unit has completed *Strong to Save*, a documentary which is being dedicated to the Royal Lifeboat Institution. In Cornwall W. Pollard is making a film dealing with the local traditions, customs and industries, an experiment in dramatised travelogue.


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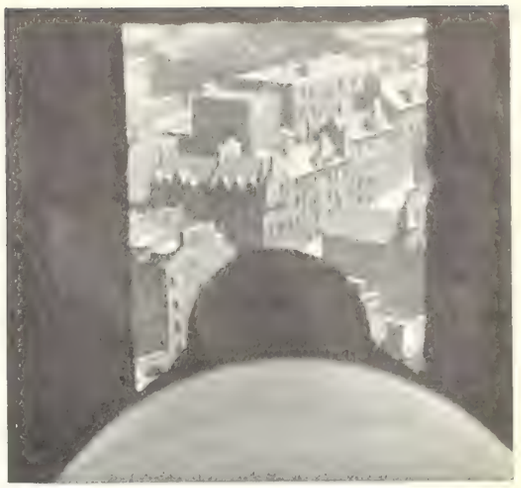
# THE PROJECTION OF SCOTLAND

## by John Grierson



SCOTLAND is organising the production of its propaganda films on a national scale and this is a great deal wiser than the piecemeal methods now pursued in England. The generous gift of £5,000 by Mr. J. A. MacTaggart has enabled the Secretary of State, Mr. Elliot, to start a fund; the British Council and Commissioner for the Special Areas in Scotland have added to it. It is expected that the various national industries will each, with its own sum for production, add to the list of films which from next year on, are to tell the story of Scotland.

We are supposed, in this country, to hold the secret of film propaganda. During the past year or two, several foreign governments have been examining the work of the documentary groups, analysing their methods of distribution, cross-examining the people responsible, on how films can be fitted to different national purposes. Japan, Turkey, Egypt, Denmark, Brazil, Portugal, Belgium, among others, have made special efforts to convey the British experience overseas. The latest and most interesting student is the United States, where Mr. Rotha is having a great success lecturing on the documentary method and showing the best examples of propaganda work. A flow of students, mostly from American Universities and Washington Departments, has come to London to examine the special possibilities of the film in public administration and social education.

It is curious that the so nationally conscious Scotland should only now be demonstrating its interest. In the past, few films have been made of the North, and all, or nearly all of them, by Englishmen. The Empire Marketing Board made four films on the Scottish fisheries, and one of sheep farming on the borders. The G.P.O. has touched Scotland in its *Night Mail* and *Copper Web*. The Travel Association did Edinburgh in *Key to Scotland*. Two or three years ago there was a film made locally in the Shetlands and some scenic material was gathered in the West Highlands for *Macbrayne*. Now and again an itinerant unit from America has sentimentalised the hills and the glens, the Highland games and the bagpipes.

What a poor picture of Scotland all this represents. Nothing of the heart of the country—of its contribution to science, industry and the life of the century. No sight of the Clyde traffic and shipbuilding, of the farming Lothians and the fruit farming valley of the Tay. Nothing of what Scotland has done to colonise the Empire or of the qualities of persistence which have made Scotland not uncelebrated among the smaller nations.

**"Highlands of Scotland"—March of Time**

Mr. Percy Straus, Chairman of the Committee of Architecture and Physical Planning for the New York's World's Fair in 1939, has described the idea on which the World's Fair will be built, and this is what he says: "Below the superficially pleasing sensory impression, the World's Fair intends to demonstrate what the professions and industries of the world have so far accomplished towards the improvement in existence of the human being. To this end the world's professions and industries who are attacking the social problems of food, housing, clothing, health, transportation, and distribution, are afforded opportunity to show, group by group, what each has done and are challenged to make that show so plain that none may mistake the significance of their accomplishment. It is not too much to expect that out of such grouping of unrelated activities will come a better concept of the point at which their responsibilities interlock, their principles coincide. Nor is it beyond the realm of possibility that from a broad demonstration of the best tools for living of 1939 may take form a reliable forecast of the improved tools of the future. In fact, the theme of the Fair is 'Building the World of Tomorrow.' The directors of the project believe that an international exposition cannot to-day justify itself unless it sets its face with a maximum determination toward the future."

There has been a great deal of talk about the Empire Exhibition in Scotland next year, but at no time has the idea of it been so clearly and strongly articulated. And it is some such idea that is obviously wanted in connection with this plan for making Scottish films. They also should dove-tail in a considered scheme for showing the country's determination towards the future; and this would be enough to give dramatic perspective to every industry and every national interest which may wish to have its pictures shown. As Bernard Shaw has pointed out somewhere, there are simple measuring rules of purpose which make great projects simple.

But there is another thing to remember too. There is a factor in a country which is not of to-day, nor to-morrow, nor even of yesterday, and it lies in the continuing identity and spirit of the people. It will be a poor picture of Scotland if it remembers all the hospitals and housing estates, and forgets the language of a Rangers-Celtic football match.

**"Key to Scotland"**

**"Key to Scotland"**

# FILM GUIDE

## *Shorts*

**Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves** (Puppets in Gaspar-colour).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Slatinay and George Pal.

| | |
|---|---|
| ANNITSFORD: Coronation | Jan. 20, 3 days |
| BIRMINGHAM: Rialto, Hall Green | Jan. 3, 6 days |
| BIRKENHEAD: Plaza | Jan. 3, 6 days |
| BEDMINSTER: Ambassadors | Jan. 22, 1 day |
| BLACKHALL ROCKS: Super | Jan. 27, 3 days |
| CATRINE: Wilson Hall | Jan. 10, 1 day |
| DUNDEE: Princess | Jan. 3, 3 days |
| DUDLEY: Grand | Jan. 20, 3 days |
| EAST KILBRIDE: Picture House | Jan. 13, 1 day |
| FARNWORTH: Empire | Jan. 10, 3 days |
| HAYDOCK: Picturedrome | Jan. 7, 2 days |
| KIRKHAM: Empire | Jan. 13, 3 days |
| LESMAHAGOW: Ritz | Jan. 14, 2 days |
| LOSSIEMOUTH: Town Hall | Jan. 20, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Capitol | Jan. 24, 6 days |
| LEEDS: Parkfield | Jan. 27, 3 days |
| WEYMOUTH: Odeon | Jan. 24, 3 days |

**Colourful Cairo** (Travelogue).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.

| | |
|---|---|
| BIRTLEY: Apollo | Jan. 26, 4 days |
| CATRINE: Wilson Hall | Jan. 10, 1 day |
| CHEADLE: Royal | Jan. 11, 1 day |
| EDINBURGH: Monseigneur | Jan. 20, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Princes | Jan. 3, 3 days |
| LONDON: News Theatre, Agar Street, Strand | Jan. 31, 4 days |
| Embassy, Notting Hall Gate | Jan. 13, 3 days |
| SALCOMBE: Cinema | Jan. 13, 3 days |
| WREXHAM: Odeon | Jan. 24, 6 days |

**Cover to Cover** (Documentary of book production).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films.
*DIRECTION:* Alexander Shaw.
ANNITSFORD: Coronation Jan. 20, 4 days


90%

Maybe it's just luck when a studio records **90**% of all the documentary films made in this country in one month.

But when that same studio goes on recording **90**% all the time, it isn't just luck, it's darn good recording.

And as **90**% of the documentary producers go to the studios that record **90**% of the films, you can now see why **90**% of the producers go to Imperial.

*20 out of the 27 films shown on these pages were recorded by*

**Imperial Sound Studios**
84 WARDOUR STREET . GER 1963


ABERDEEN: News Theatre Jan. 31, 6 days
BIRTLEY: Apollo Jan. 26, 4 days
BOLTON: Palace Jan. 20, 3 days
BOWNESS: Royalty Jan. 10, 3 days
BEACONSFIELD: Picture House Jan. 6, 3 days
CATRINE: Wilson Hall Jan. 10, 1 day
DUDLEY: Grand Jan. 20, 4 days
DUBLIN: Princess Jan. 23, 4 days
Rialto Jan. 9, 4 days
DOLGELLY: Cosy Jan. 24, 3 days
DUNMANAY: Broadway Jan. 16, 2 days
EAST KILBRIDE: Picture House Jan. 13, 1 day
HOLSWORTHY: Cinema Jan. 3, 3 days
KINGS LYNN: Majestic Jan. 31, 3 days
LEVEN: Troxy Jan. 6, 3 days
LESMAHAGOW: Ritz Jan. 14, 2 days
LLANGEFNI: Arcadia Jan. 20, 3 days
ORRELL: Majestic Jan. 13, 3 days
PENYGROES: Plaza Jan. 5, 2 days
SCHOLES: Labour Hall Jan. 13, 3 days
SEATON BURN: Queens Jan. 20, 4 days
TOWYN: Cinema Jan. 10, 3 days
WOOLTON: Picture House Jan. 20, 3 days

**Heads and Tails** (Film of greyhound racing).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning

| | |
|---|---|
| GRIMSBY: Savoy | Jan. 17, 6 days |
| KETTERING: Electric Palace | Jan. 10, 6 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Rivoli | Jan. 27, 3 days |
| LONDON: World News, Praed Street | Jan. 13, 4 days |
| NORTH SHIELDS: Princes | Jan. 17, 6 days |
| REDDITCH: Gaumont Palace | Jan. 17, 3 days |

**Heart of an Empire** (Historical significance of St. James's Park and the surrounding buildings and memorials).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films.
*DIRECTION:* Marion Grierson

| | |
|---|---|
| MARKET HARBOROUGH: Oriental Cinema | Jan. 3, 3 days |
| PRESTON: Carlton Cinema | Jan. 3, 6 days |

**Forbidden Frontier** (Political situation between Poland and Lithuania).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* World Window Productions
*SUPERVISION:* Sir Philip Gibbs

| | |
|---|---|
| BIRMINGHAM: Picture Hse, Harborne | Jan. 24, 3 days |
| EAST GRINSTEAD: Radio Centre | Jan. 20, 3 days |
| PUDSEY: Picture House | Jan. 20, 3 days |
| SCARBOROUGH: Londesborough | Jan. 16, 1 day |
| WORTHING: Rivoli | Jan. 3, 7 days |

**Hollywood To-day** (Behind the scenes in Film City).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Rupert Grayson

| | |
|---|---|
| GLASGOW: Muirend, Toledo | Jan. 3, 3 days |
| Battlefield, Mayfair | Jan. 3, 3 days |
| ILKLEY: Picture House | Jan. 24, 6 days |
| RADCLIFFE: Odeon | Jan. 6, 3 days |
| WHALLEY RANGE: Odeon | Jan. 13, 3 days |

**Islands of the Bounty** (Islands associated with the famous mutiny).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.

| | |
|---|---|
| ANNAN: Bank | Jan. 24, 2 days |
| ABERDEEN: News Theatre | Jan. 10, 6 days |
| BEDMINSTER: Ambassadors | Jan. 8, 1 day |
| DUBLIN: Phibsboro Cinema | Jan. 27, 3 days |
| Mary Street Cinema | Jan. 20, 3 days |
| GATESHEAD: Askew | Jan. 27, 3 days |
| HORDEN: Picture House | Jan. 27, 3 days |
| HENDON: Classic | Jan. 6, 3 days |
| KNUTSFORD: Marcliff | Jan. 20, 3 days |
| KIRKHAM: Empire | Jan. 13, 3 days |
| LONGRIDGE: Palace | Jan. 27, 3 days |
| LOSSIEMOUTH: Town Hall | Jan. 20, 3 days |
| NEATH: Gnoll Hall | Jan. 3, 3 days |
| NORTON: Cinema | Jan. 6, 3 days |
| NEWTON GRANGE: Picture Palace | Jan. 27, 3 days |
| OLDHAM: Electraceum | Jan. 6, 3 days |
| RHYL: Odeon | Jan. 10, 6 days |
| STOCKPORT: Kings | Jan. 17, 2 days |
| WHITBURN: Miners Welfare Hall | Jan. 7, 2 days |

**Kew Gardens** (A Horticultural Documentary)
*PRODUCTION:* Harold Lowenstein for Short Film Productions
*DIRECTION:* Philip Leacock
*PHOTOGRAPHY:* Vivian Braun
LONDON: Tatler Jan. 31, 7 days

**Men Against the Sea** (Documentary of North Sea trawling).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Vernon Sewell

| | |
|---|---|
| DEVONPORT: Tivoli | Jan. 13, 3 days |
| INVERKEITHING: Majestic | Jan. 24, 3 days |
| LEEDS: Holbeck, Queens | Jan. 31, 3 days |

**Netherlands Old and New** (Travelogue of Holland and the Island of Curacao).
*PRODUCTION:* Cedric Mallabey
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph

| | |
|---|---|
| BIRMINGHAM: Picture Hse, Harborne | Jan. 17, 3 days |
| BIRKENHEAD: Super | Jan. 27, 3 days |
| CIRENCESTER: Picture House | Jan. 20, 3 days |
| CHESTER: Gaumont Palace | Jan. 3, 6 days |
| EDINBURGH: Monseigneur | Jan. 10, 3 days |
| EGREMONT: Gaumont Palace | Jan. 17, 6 days |
| GAINSBOROUGH: Grand | Jan. 27, 3 days |
| HAMILTON: La Scala | Jan. 13, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Corona | Jan. 6, 3 days |
| Gaumont, Princes Park | Jan. 24, 3 days |
| Plaza | Jan. 3, 3 days |
| Rivoli, Aigburth | Jan. 24, 3 days |
| LYDNEY: Picture House | Jan. 3, 3 days |
| MONMOUTH: Picture House | Jan. 24, 3 days |
| MOTHERWELL: Pavilion | Jan. 27, 3 days |
| STOCKPORT: Plaza | Jan. 10, 6 days |
| WEYMOUTH: Regent | Jan. 31, 6 days |

**Night Mail** (Documentary of the northward trip of the postal special).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Basil Wright, Harry Watt

| | |
|---|---|
| BLACKHALL ROCKS: Super | Jan. 27, 3 days |
| EASINGTON: Rialto | Jan. 27, 3 days |
| HUDDERSFIELD: Alhambra, Golcar | Jan. 6, 3 days |
| NEW MILLS: Art Cinema | Jan. 17, 4 days |
| SCHOLES: Stoll Picture House | Jan. 27, 3 days |

**Nomad in the North** (Scenic film of Norway).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION & DIRECTION:* C. E. Hodges

| | |
|---|---|
| COVENTRY: Gaumont Palace | Jan. 9, 1 day |
| FALKIRK: Pavilion | Jan. 6, 3 days |
| LONDON: World News, Praed Street | Jan. 13, 3 days |
| PUDSEY: Picture House | Jan. 13, 3 days |

**People in the Parks.**
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Paul Burnford, Donald Alexander

| | |
|---|---|
| BRADFORD: Picturedrome | Jan. 27, 3 days |
| HANDSWORTH: Grand | Jan. 31, 3 days |
| HAWORTH: Bronte | Jan. 17, 3 days |
| MANCHESTER: Marcliff, Hazel Grove | Jan. 20, 3 days |
| MARKET HARBOROUGH: Oriental | Jan. 13, 3 days |
| PITLOCHRY: Picture House | Jan. 3, 3 days |
| ROTHERHAM: Tivoli | Jan. 6, 3 days |
| SILKSWORTH: Hippodrome | Jan. 31, 3 days |

**Plane Sailing** (The ins and outs of gliding).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Bosworth Goldman

| | |
|---|---|
| ANDOVER: Odeon | Jan. 13, 3 days |
| BANGOR: Plaza | Jan. 10, 3 days |
| BRIDLINGTON: Lounge | Jan. 3, 3 days |
| BURY: Odeon | Jan. 3, 3 days |
| LEEDS: Capitol, Meanwood | Jan. 13, 3 days |
| Carlton | Jan. 13, 3 days |
| Hyde Park Picture House | Jan. 27, 3 days |
| Queens, Holbeck | Jan. 3, 3 days |
| LONDON: Monseigneur, Leicester Square, W.1 | Jan. 17, 3 days |

**Rooftops of London** (Documentary).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Paul Rotha

| | |
|---|---|
| BARTON-ON-HUMBER: Oxford Pic. Hse | Jan. 6, 3 days |
| COGGESHALL: Kinema | Jan. 10, 3 days |
| DENNISTOUR: Park Cinema | Jan. 6, 3 days |
| STOURBRIDGE: Scala Theatre | Jan. 3, 3 days |

**Secrets of the Stars** (Spotlight on British stages and studios).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Argyle British Productions Ltd.

| | |
|---|---|
| BURY: Odeon | Jan. 17, 6 days |
| CIRENCESTER: Picture House | Jan. 6, 3 days |
| GOOLE: Tower | Jan. 17, 3 days |

# Shorts (*Contd.*)

GLASGOW: Capitol, Ibrox Jan. 31, 6 days
New Parade, Dennistoun Jan. 31, 6 days
Tivoli, Partick Jan. 31, 6 days
HULL: Carlton Jan. 20, 3 days
National Jan. 13, 3 days
Playhouse Jan. 24, 3 days
HUDDERSFIELD: Carlton Jan. 6, 3 days
Lyceum Jan. 6, 3 days
ILKLEY: Picture House Jan. 10, 6 days
LONDON: Hippodrome, Cam Tn, N.W. Jan. 17, 7 days
LIVERPOOL: Rivoli, Aigburth Jan. 13, 3 days
LEEDS: Kingsway Jan. 3, 6 days
Hillcrest Jan. 24, 3 days
NORTHWICH: Pavilion Jan. 17, 3 days
PUDSEY: Picture House Jan. 3, 3 days
PORTSMOUTH: Theatre Royal Jan. 23, 7 days
PRESTON: New Victoria Jan. 31, 6 days
REDDITCH: Gaumont Palace Jan. 10, 6 days
SOWERBY BRIDGE: Electric Jan. 20, 3 days
STOKE-ON-TRENT: Hippodrome Jan. 6, 3 days
WORTHING: Rivoli Jan. 10, 6 days
WEDNESBURY: Picture House Jan. 6, 3 days
WISHAW: Cinema Jan. 3, 3 days

**Snow Water** (Water power in the Swiss mountains).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* H. Dreyer
ANDOVER: Odeon Jan. 3, 3 days
HAMILTON: Regal Jan. 6, 3 days
MANSFIELD: Empire Jan. 24, 6 days
SOUTHEND: Kursaal Jan. 13, 3 days
SCARBOROUGH: Londesboro Jan. 30, 1 day

**Southward Ho!** (A journey across Franz-Josef glacier).
*PRODUCTION:* C. E. Hodges
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
BIRMINGHAM: Picture Hse, Harborne Jan. 31, 6 days
CINDERFORD: Palace Jan. 27, 3 days
CHESTER: Music Hall Jan. 20, 3 days
EGREMONT: Gaumont Palace Jan. 10, 6 days
GUERNSEY: Lyric Jan. 31, 6 days
LIVERPOOL: Corona Jan. 31, 6 days
Casino Jan. 10, 3 days
Empress Jan. 3, 6 days
Gaumont, Princes Park Jan. 27, 3 days
Plaza Jan. 20, 3 days
Tatler Jan. 20, 3 days
NORTH SHIELDS: Princes Jan. 3, 6 days

**Spring Comes to Town** (About Hyde Park).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* M. L. Nathan
LEEDS: Tatler Jan. 24, 6 days
LONDON: World News, Praed Street Jan. 3, 3 days

**Statue Parade** (Historical treatment of London Statues).
*DISTRIBUTION:* M.G.M.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Paul Burnford and Ralph Keene
BIRMINGHAM: Ashted Row P.P. Jan. 6, 3 days
PRESCOT: Lyme House Cinema Jan. 3, 3 days
ST. AUSTELL: Capitol Jan. 3, 3 days

**Strange Adventures** (About Africa).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
ALLOA: La Scala Jan. 27, 3 days
BRIDLINGTON: Lounge Jan. 24, 3 days
HARBOURNE: Picture House Jan. 6, 3 days
LOWESTOFT: Odeon Jan. 24, 6 days
LONDON: Eros, Piccadilly Jan. 10, 3 days
World News, Praed Street Jan. 10, 3 days
TUNBRIDGE WELLS: Ritz Jan. 17, 6 days

**Sunny Tessin** (Survey of the Canton Tessin, Southern Switzerland).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
LIVERPOOL: Trocadero Jan. 24, 6 days
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: Queens Jan. 31, 6 days

**This Other Eden** (A trip down the river Eden, in Westmorland).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Pennine Films Ltd.
CHESTER: Tatler Jan. 17, 6 days
EDINBURGH: Monseigneur Jan. 13, 3 days
LONDON: News Theatre, Victoria Stn. Jan. 6, 3 days
News Thea., Waterloo Stn. Jan. 14, 4 days
Sphere News Theatre, Tottenham Court Road Jan. 13, 4 days
MANCHESTER: Tatler Jan. 17, 6 days
MORECAMBE: Tower Jan. 2, 1 day

**To-day We Live** (The depressed areas of Wales).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Ralph Bond and R. I. Grierson
CARDIFF: Canton Jan. 3, 3 days
Gaiety Jan. 6, 3 days
Monico Jan. 24, 3 days
Ninian Jan. 17, 3 days
Plaza Jan. 27, 3 days
Regent Jan. 13, 3 days
Splott Jan. 10, 3 days
Tivoli Jan. 20, 3 days
EDINBURGH: Caley Jan. 9, 1 day
GLASGOW: Picture House Jan. 23, 1 day

**Way to the Sea** (Documentary of the roads and railways from London to the coast).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* J. B. Holmes
ACCRINGTON: Princes Jan. 3, 6 days
ASHBOURNE: Elite Jan. 13, 3 days
BIRMINGHAM: Rialto, Hall Green Jan. 3, 6 days
BRADFORD: Picturedrome Jan. 31, 3 days
COLLYHURST: Palace Jan. 31, 6 days
FAILSWORTH: Grand Jan. 24, 6 days
HOLLINWOOD: Scala Jan. 24, 6 days
PITLOCHRY: Picture House Jan. 13, 3 days
SOUTH QUEENSFERRY: Rio Jan. 17, 2 days
UTTOXETER: Elite Jan. 20, 3 days
WILMSLOW: Rex Jan. 31, 3 days


**ALL DISNEY PROGRAMMES**
at the Tatler Theatre
Charing Cross Road
Weeks commencing
January 3rd
January 10th
January 17th
Further details from The Manager.


**Wheel and Woe** (The evolution of the motor car).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Liberty
*DIRECTION:* W. G. Duncalf
ALLOA: La Scala Jan. 6, 3 days
EDINBURGH: Grand, Stockbridge Jan. 24, 3 days
FALKIRK: Pavilion Jan. 3, 3 days
GLASGOW: B.B. Cinerama Jan. 10, 6 days
Kelvin, Finnieston Jan. 17, 3 days
Picture House, Partick Jan. 20, 3 days
Star, Maryhill Jan. 31, 3 days
HUDDERSFIELD: Carlton Jan. 20, 3 days
Lyceum Jan. 20, 3 days
HULL: West Park Jan. 3, 3 days
KIRKCALDY: Rialto Jan. 3, 3 days
LIVERPOOL: Rivoli, Aigburth Jan. 6, 3 days
LONDON: Eros News Theatre Jan. 6, 4 days
News Thea., Victoria Stn. Jan. 27, 3 days
LUTON: Empire Jan. 13, 3 days
MIDDLESBROUGH: Pavilion Jan. 6, 3 days
NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: News Theatre Jan. 17, 6 days
NORTHWICH: Pavilion Jan. 27, 3 days
PLYMOUTH: Palladium Jan. 31, 6 days
Savoy Jan. 31, 6 days

# Foreign Films

**Amphitryon** (French).
*PRODUCTION:* UFA
*DIRECTION:* Reinhold Schunzel
*STARRING:* Henry Garat
Armand-Bernard
Jeanne Boitel
LONDON: Curzon Jan. 1, indefinitely

**Burgtheater** (Austrian).
*SCENARIO & DIRECTION:* Willi Forst
*STARRING:* Werner Krauss
Olga Tschechowa
LONDON: Forum Jan. 16, 7 days

**La Belle Equipe** (French).
*DIRECTION:* Julien Duvivier
*STARRING:* Jean Gabin
Charles Vanel
Marcel Geniat
LONDON: Berkeley Following *Monica and Martin*

**Un Carnet de Bal** (Winner of the Mussolini cup-French).
*DIRECTION:* Julien Duvivier
*STARRING:* Françoise Rosay
Harry Baur
Pierre Blanchar
Fernandel
Raimu
Robert Lynen
LONDON: Studio One Jan. 1, indefinitely

**Ernte** (German).
*DIRECTION:* Geza von Bolvary
*STARRING:* Paula Wessely
LONDON: Forum Jan. 9, 7 days

**La Grande Illusion** (French).
*PRODUCTION:* Realisation d'Art Cinematographique
*DIRECTION:* Jean Renoir
*STARRING:* Erich von Stroheim
Jean Gabin
Dita Parlo
LONDON: Academy Following *Squadrone Bianco*

**La Kermesse Héroïque** (French).
*DIRECTION:* Jaques Feyder
*STARRING:* Françoise Rosay
Jean Murat
LONDON: Forum Jan. 30, 7 days

**Monica and Martin** (Versprich Mir Nichts—German).
*DIRECTION:* Wolfgang Liebeneiner
*STARRING:* Luise Ullrich
Victor de Kowa
Heinrich George
LONDON: Berkeley Jan. 1, indefinitely

**Nina Petrovna** (French).
*PRODUCTION:* Solar, Paris
*DIRECTION:* Victor Tourjansky
*STARRING:* Isa Miranda
Fernand Gravet
LONDON: Curzon Following *Amphitryon*

**So Ended a Great Love** (Austrian).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Denning
*DIRECTION:* Karl Hartl
*STARRING:* Paula Wessely
Willi Forst
HEDNESFORD: Tivoli Jan. 23, 1 day
WANSTEAD: Kinema Jan. 3, 3 days

**Squadrone Bianco** (Italian).
*PRODUCTION:* Roma Films
*DIRECTION:* Augusto Genina
*STARRING:* Fosco Gianchetti
Anthony Centa
Fulvia Lanzi
LONDON: Academy Jan. 1, indefinitely

**We from Krondstadt** (Russian).
*PRODUCTION:* Lenfilm
*DISTRIBUTION:* Film Society
*DIRECTION:* Vinievski
LONDON: Forum Jan. 23, 7 days


**PROFESSIONAL EDITING for Private Films**

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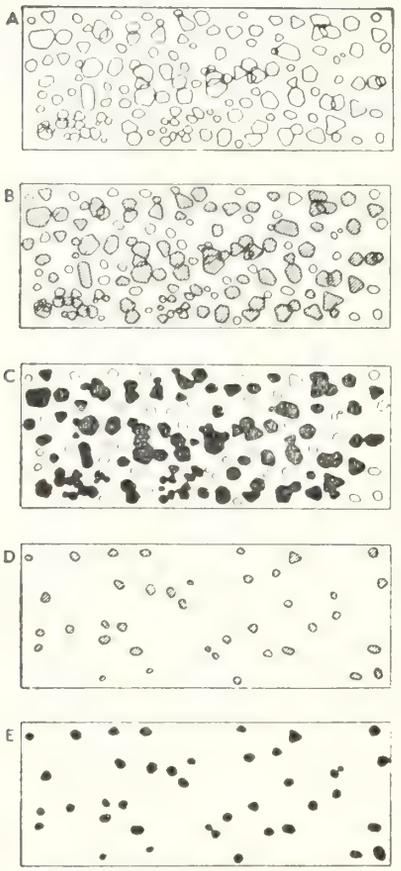
# WHY REVERSAL FILM

## *for sub-standard movies*




A. *Diagram showing the unexposed grains of silver bromide in the film.*

B. *The largest and most sensitive grains are exposed in the camera.*

C. *The exposed grains are developed to form a negative image.*

D. *The developed grains are removed by a bleaching bath which dissolves silver, leaving the undeveloped grains, which are now exposed.*

E. *These grains are now developed, forming a positive image.*

**One big advantage of reversal film is absence of graininess in the positive image. The extreme fineness of grain is a direct result of the *reversal process.***

**The following description of the reversal process is given in "Photography" by Dr. C. E. K. Mees, Director of Kodak Research.**

"In the *reversal process,* the exposed image is developed, and then the developed silver is dissolved in a *bleaching* bath, which oxidises the silver. This leaves behind the undeveloped silver bromide, which was not affected by the developer because it was not exposed to light. After a fresh exposure to light, this remaining silver bromide is developed in its turn and gives a positive. This is illustrated in the figure, which is a drawing made from pictures taken through the microscope. In Section A, we see the grains of the light-sensitive silver bromide in the emulsion, and in Section B there are marked, by cross-hatching, those which have been affected by light during exposure in the camera. They would not show any change to the eye, of course, because the change by light is not visible. These grains form the latent image. After development, these exposed grains turn into black metallic silver, and this is shown in Section C of the diagram. Then the bleaching bath removes all the silver and leaves behind the silver bromide grains which were not exposed, as shown in Section D. These are re-exposed and developed and make the final positive, as we see in Section E."

. . . .

"The graininess of ordinary negatives is due to the large clumps of silver bromide grains present in the emulsion. These large clumps are more sensitive to light than small clumps or widely separated grains, and, therefore, when a short exposure is given, the large clumps are the first to become exposed. These are removed in the reversal process, and the final image is made up of the grains of the least sensitivity. Since these are the smallest grains and the smallest clumps of grains, *such a direct positive image shows very little graininess.*"

***For full particulars of Ciné-Kodak Films and Kodak service, write to Mr. G. Taylor, Dept. 57,***

# KODAK Limited

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# FILM SOCIETIES WHAT NOW?

## *Norman Wilson's challenging criticism of the Film Societies Movement*

ARE the film societies losing their vitality? In some districts membership is falling, in others soaring. Both tendencies might be attributed to a change in the quality of the feature films available for exhibition. Continental production is undeniably more popular and less dynamic than it was some years ago. It would seem that this change suits the taste of some societies but offends others more critical.

For eight or nine years (London longer) the film societies were in the vanguard of film progress—creating a new, discriminating audience, paving the way for the repertory cinemas, supporting (at least morally) the work of experimental producers. Are we growing complacent, content to satisfy only that section of our membership which applauds the popular successes of the Academy or Studio One?

What else is there to show the selection committee may ask? Even the London Society, progenitor of all exhibiting groups, finds it sufficiently difficult to get suitable films that it has cut down the number of its performances. And even these that are obtained by the London Society are not always available to provincial groups, owing to the crazy conditions of distribution which seem to have penetrated from the film trade to the film society movement.

Even so, has the movement been fostered to give its acclaim to such films as *Savoy Hotel* 217, *Bonne Chance* or *Ernte* to the exclusion of *Zéro de Conduite*, *L'Atalante*, *We from Kronstadt* or even *Turn of the Tide?*

As Chairman of a Society which is one of the oldest in the country, I know from sad experience the difficulties of booking. I am only too conscious that owing to the absurd reluctance of some renters to release foreign films to provincial societies, though they know perfectly well a public showing outside London is impossible, my own Society has had to show certain films whose exhibition has been difficult to justify. More fortunately, I know less of the doubts which assail the officials of some societies who say "we dare not show that film; all our members would not like it and we might get resignations."

Rather resignation than stagnation. If film societies are not going to be courageous, experimental, progressive, they will not fulfil their function. When doubts assail us about a film, let us consider why we earn remission of entertainments tax.

Again, are we making the most of the material which is available? Have we given sufficient consideration to the possibility of comparison (*e.g. Pett & Pott:* Laurel & Hardy) in programme composition? Have we ever attempted to show to our sophisticated audiences an honest-to-goodness Western? Have we tried to illustrate the difference in dance treatment: Astaire, Berkeley, *Song of Ceylon*, peasants, natives? Have we ever deliberately compared documentary styles? Have we, in short, ever tried to create constructive programmes?

The film society in the industrial district of Billingham strangely, and perhaps commendably, records a drop of 15 per cent in its attendances, observing that this is probably a reflection of the steadily improving quality of ordinary commercial films and the lack of any noticeable advance in the continental films which have been shown. As a general statement this is no doubt true, and it points the problem common to most societies. The average run of continental films is just not good enough. For this the film societies can accept no blame.

WE can only support what is produced: we cannot create it. The American movie, though we may pretend to deride it, has for the present the more imaginative vitality. Its achievements, however, are sufficiently appreciated to need none of our assistance. British studio production is beyond our own help. But what of the realists? There can be no doubt that their achievement is the one distinctive contribution of Britain to the development of cinema. Some day it will be assessed at its real value. Meantime what are we doing to encourage and consolidate the work of our documentary producers?

True, we include many of their films in our programmes but are we not inclined, in true British fashion, to take them for granted? Should we not, in justice to ourselves, play them up, give them—with a deal more sense—something of the reverence which was once lavished on the French *avant-gardistes* and the Russian *regisseurs?*

An inherent snobbery makes us present often little-merited bouquets to continental producers while we neglect to cultivate our own creative genius. When *The Edge of the World* was released did any film society throw a reception for Michael Powell? Have not Grierson, Wright, Rotha, done more for the movement than the film societies have ever done for them? Did we play up Robert Stevenson and *Tudor Rose* when *Mary of Scotland* was ballyhooed throughout the country? Did we do anything for *Turn of the Tide* when British studios were vitiating their energies on international vapidities?

This next year may be a crucial one for the film society movement. Tyneside (rightly considered one of the most progressive groups), Glasgow and Edinburgh report increasing membership. Manchester is fighting a gallant battle and newer societies such as Belfast and Stirling are astride the first wave of enthusiasm. Aberdeen, Birmingham, Ayr and other societies are on a fairly even keel. Leicester and Dundee, on the other hand, are gravely concerned for the future, and London is singularly reticent about its membership.

The first stage of our work has been done. We must take council with ourselves about the policy of the future. Our task is not finished. We have created a vast new audience: now we must guide it. Imagination is called for. Courage is necessary. And a new vitality.

Notice of the Amateur Services Club Competition will be given in the February *W.F.N.* Owing to the rush at Christmas it was impossible to include anything in this issue.

# FILM SOCIETIES AND CLUBS

**THE GUILD OF CATHOLIC TEACHERS:** Hon. Secretary, Terence Grant, Esq., The Catholic Institute, Newton Place, Charing Cross, Glasgow.

The production unit is fortunate in having obtained the use of a new studio where they will have more complete facilities for their work. The next production will probably be a documentary showing the development of Carfin Grotto.

The Society's films, *Corpus Christi*, *The Assumption* and *Pilgrims at Carfin* (1937) were shown in the Lourdes Institute at Carfin on Monday, November 29th, to a large audience. Arrangements are now being made for shows in Coatbridge, Dumbarton and Greenock.

**THE OXFORD FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, E. F. Bowtell, Esq., 105 Victoria Road, Oxford.

Five meetings have been held at which the feature films were *We from Kronstadt*, *Vampyre*, *The Golem*, *Turksib*, *Marie Gallante* and *Zéro de Conduite*.

The most successful was undoubtedly Duvivier's *Golem* with Harry Baur.

It is hoped to select feature films for the next five meetings from *Birth of a Nation*, *Maria Bashkirtseff*, *Le Roman d'un Tricheur*, *The New Gulliver*, *The Dawn*, *Dood Water*, etc.

**MANCHESTER AND SALFORD FILM SOCIETY:** Hon Secretary, R. Cordwell, Esq., 13 Milwain Drive, Heaton Chapel, Stockport.

For January 23rd the feature will be either *The Dawn* or *Music im Blut*. *La Kermesse Héroïque* is booked for February 20th.

Mr. Ivor Montagu will address a joint members' meeting of this Society and the Manchester and District Film Institute Society at a meeting arranged in January, and a half yearly members' meeting will be held early in February. It is hoped to show *The New Gulliver* either on March 20th or on April 19th.

**FILM SOCIETY OF GLASGOW:** Hon.Secretary, D. Paterson Walker, Esq., 129 St. Vincent Street, Glasgow, C.2.

Films shown on December 5th were *The Story of a Weather Disturbance* (G.B. Instructional), *The Saving of Bill Blewitt* (Harry Watt—G.P.O.), *Papageno* (Lotte Reiniger), *Heredity in Man* (G.B. Instructional), and *Les Loups Entre Nous* (shown at the Curzon as *The Sequel to the Second Bureau*).

**MERSEYSIDE FILM INSTITUTE SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, 5–6 Bluecoat Chambers, School Lane, Liverpool, 1.

Programme on December 7th included *Children at School* (Realist Film Unit), *Rooftops of London* (Strand Films), Len Lye's *N. or N.W.*, George Pal's *Philips' Broadcast of* 1938, and *The Man Who Knew Too Little*. Big picture was *The Golem*, directed by Julien Duvivier.

**WOLVERHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Membership Secretary, Miss D. Roston, 60 Great Brickkiln Street. Hon. Programme Secretary, E. L. Packer, Esq., 58 Himley Crescent, Wolverhampton.

At the meeting on December 15th the Programme was headed by *Merlusse* and *Riders to the Sea*, with *The Great Train Robbery* and *How to be a Detective* (Benchley) as supporting films.

**THE LONDON SCHOOLS' FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, F. E. Farley, Esq., 50 Ashridge Crescent, Shrewsbury Park, S.E.18.

The London Schools' Film Society announces its first evening film school for the Spring of 1938. The arrangements provide an introductory course of sub-standard cinematography in relation to education. The subjects of the course include principles and practice of sub-standard projection, the arrangement of film lessons, the cinema in relation to extra curriculum activities of the school, the making of simple classroom films, and the cinema and cultural training. The classes are held at the Institute of Education, Southampton Row, W.C. at 6.30 p.m. on alternate Friday evenings commencing January 14th, 1938. All enquiries must be addressed to the Secretary.

The secretaries of the branch organisations which have already been established are:—Battersea and Wandsworth, Mr. K. D. Hacker, 18 Morella Road, S.W.12 ; Woolwich and Greenwich, Mr. H. Gibbons, 164 Shooters Hill Road, S.E.3 ; West London, Mr. H. Pomeroy, 25 Fairdale Gardens, Hayes, Middlesex.

**SOUTHAMPTON FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. General Secretary, J. S. Fairfax Jones, Esq., 10 Golden Square, W.1. Hon. Southampton Secretary, D. A. Yeoman, Esq., Ascupart House, Portswood Road, Southampton. Hon. Winchester Secretary, Miss R. Keyser, 12 St. Swithun Street, Winchester.

The Society gives six afternoon performances each season at the Regal, Southampton. There is a branch at Winchester for the recruitment of members. Among the films on the selection list for the present season are: *We From Kronstadt*, *La Kermesse Héroïque*, *The Court Waltzes*, *Ernte*, *Der Herrscher*, *Le Roman d'un Tricheur*, *The New Gulliver*, *Spanish Earth* and *Der Ammenkoenig*.

**THE CHILDREN'S FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretaries, Miss C. W. Harley and Mr. J. S. Fairfax Jones. Headquarters at The Everyman Cinema Theatre, Hampstead.

Now in its fourth season, the Society gives programmes of selected films at special performances on Saturday mornings. Among those who have spoken at performances are Mary Field, Paul Rotha, Basil Wright and Evelyn Spice.

**THE EXPERIMENTAL FILM EXCHANGE:** Vivian Braun, Esq., 27 Ridgeway, Wimbledon, London, S.W.19.

The latest of a series of experiments carried out by the above, which exists for the study and advancement of film art, has shown once more that the foundation of the film is *cutting*. Harold Lowenstein, Joan Murray and Vivian Braun recently carried out an experiment in analysed cutting and used as material the simple action of a person rising from a lying position on the ground. And this is cinema experimentation in its simplest form. Many other much more original and complex works are being carried out.

During the last few months the E.F.E. have been able to actually help many amateurs in the production of films, from personal ones to purely experimental essays.

**WEST ESSEX FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, L. G. Watson, Esq., 10 Meadway, Buckhurst Hill.

The Society desires to take this opportunity of wishing the Proprietors and Management of *World Film News*, and all readers, a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

A series of addresses on the various aspects of film-making is being given by members at technical meetings during the winter months. The talks so far have been on the subjects of "Camera," "Emulsions," "Filters," "Camera Work" and "Lighting."

Whilst membership must necessarily be limited, there are one or two vacancies in the Society. Applications, for full or associate membership, should be addressed to the Secretary, as above.

**METEOR FILM PRODUCING SOCIETY:** Interim Secretary: Ian S. Ross, Esq., 80 Buchanan Street, Glasgow, C.1. Studio: 234 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow.

Production of the film for the Scottish Churches' Film Guild has been proceeding steadily and satisfactorily since the beginning of September. *Minister's Monday*, as the film is called, is a straightforward record of typical happenings in the life of a Scottish country minister. The scenario is by Angus MacVicar, the well-known novelist, and the film, which is now nearly completed, runs to 800 ft. 16 mm.

**WEST MIDDLESEX AMATEUR CINE CLUB:** Hon. Secretary, E. H. Whittleton, Esq., 39 Derwentwater Road, Acton, W.3.

Production has now started on the new film, provisionally titled *Climax*. The first set has been built, and the scenes shot. This set represented the Chief partner's office in a stockbroker's office. Great assistance was gained from the recent articles on set construction published in *World Film News*. Another set to be built later is a village "pub." Here again the above-mentioned articles will prove a useful source of ideas.

**ACE MOVIES:** Hon. Secretary, Channon Wood, Esq., 15 Openview, S.W.18. Studio: 90 High Street Mews, S.W.19.

Preparations are under way for the shooting of the big banqueting scenes in the current production. The players are masked and in fancy dress. Volunteers are urgently required to make up the required number of revellers (ladies especially). There is no charge, but players will be required to supply their own fancy dresses.

**FILM AND PHOTO LEAGUE:** Hon. Secretary, H. S. Cuthbertson, Esq., 3 Somerset Terrace, Euston, W.C.1.

Since the last published report the League has released several films, the chief of which is a two-reel story-comedy, *Red, Right and Bloo*, acted by the students at the Left Book Club Summer School. This is to be exhibited at the Royal Photographic Society during November. The League is also completing a two-reel Kodachrome-colour film on the struggle in Spain. This will be cut to the sound of Jack Lindsay's mass recital *On Guard for Spain*, as played at the Unity Theatre Club, with disc recording.

A Film School and Festival is to be held by the League from January 21st to 25th.

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# world FILM news

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## On Gas Manufacture

**"HOW GAS IS MADE"** **10** *minutes.*

**"THE ROMANCE OF A LUMP OF COAL"** **5** *minutes.*

## On By-Products

**"THE MAN WHO KNEW TOO LITTLE"** **5** *minutes.*

## On Cooking

**"DAISY BELL COMES TO TOWN"**
Milk cookery with the Griffiths Brothers as a cow. **10** *minutes.*

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The first British film on Kitchen Planning. **10** *minutes.*

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M. Boulestin gives instructions on basic principles of cooking. **15** *minutes.*

**"PARTY DISH"**
M. Boulestin again, making something more elaborate. **15** *minutes.*

**"DINNER HOUR"**
How the big hotels and restaurants manage in the rush hour. **16** *minutes.*

✸

*If you wish to make up a programme of these and other films of travel and cartoon, write to Mr. Thomas Baird, Film Officer of the British Commercial Gas Association, 1 Grosvenor Place, S.W.1.*

# EYES on the WORLD

## *by William P. Montague, Assignment Editor, Paramount News.*

THE question most frequently asked me when someone discovers that I am in the newsreel business is, "Why are the newsreels so uninteresting? Why do they run so many battleships and bathing beauties and baseball pictures and baby parades?" The answer is that we do our best to find pictures of greater interest to our theatre audiences than these, but we have also learned that these trite pictures do have a sure-fire interest value.

I have a budget of $20,000 a week to spend in making newsreel pictures. I have cameramen in every country of the world sitting up nights watching for interesting things to photograph. They will risk their lives to get a picture; in fact, they have done so more than once. I remember the greatest newsreel picture ever made. A cameraman was on the Lusitania after it was torpedoed. Survivors told how he rushed here and there, getting the women and children being loaded into the life-boats. He got the stokers pouring out from below decks. He climbed on to the bridge and got the Captain standing by the controls. He got the ship as she tilted over further and further. And then the Lusitania sank—and the cameraman forgot to jump. That was one picture that was never shown, and another cameraman who got carried away by his story.

The press, with its written account, cannot duplicate the talking picture, certainly the radio cannot. One of the greatest newsreel pictures of all times was that of an eight-year-old New Jersey youngster who had rescued his two little brothers from a burning house, and was sitting there on the ruins sobbing over the remnants of his bicycle. He explained quite intimately into the camera that it had been burned while he was saving his brothers, that it was what he valued most—and how was he to earn enough money to get another? It just *got* them in the theatres; it even *got* three different bicycle manufacturers who all sent the child new bicycles.

But, as I say, along with this flower of intimacy there are limitations—the limitations of the workings of a motion picture camera and of a news organisation trying to use it to catch its news on the fly. We have had to work out our own rules for handling and editing what news pictures we get. We have here a new medium, differing widely in many respects from radio and the press. We have had to work out our own code. It cannot be a hard-and-fast one that you can set down on paper. Rather it is a responsible editorial policy dictated by long distance planning in the field of human relations.

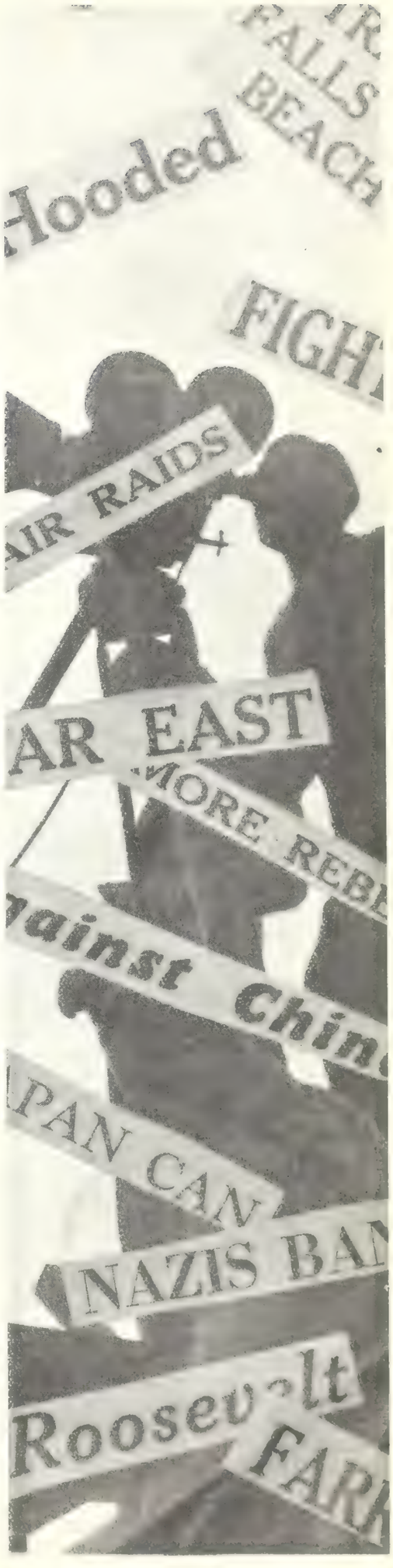
The newsreels are just about thirty years old, and according to experience it is just about that time after an invention that the social influences of an invention begin to make themselves felt. As most of you know, they started as actual newsreels, that is, one-reelers given over entirely to a news spectacle, such as a Durbar, the inauguration of a President, or a prize-fight.

Like the news pamphlet—the forerunner of the newspaper—they were originally not a regular release, but a reel made up and spot booked whenever a likely subject occurred. The Pathé brothers started the first regular newsreel release over here in 1910, and at first had hard going. Nearly anything photographic went into it in order to get out one regular reel a week—a fire engine on the run, a cornerstone-laying or an Elks' parade. Cheap footage was the prime requisite.

That the newsreel idea was a sound one was quickly proved by the popularity of the reels in the theatres, and within a couple of years Hearst had launched one, and two or three other companies foundered in and out of the field. The war came along and forced the consolidation of the reels into one reel, run more or less from Washington for purposes of national defence and propaganda; but immediately after the Armistice they were separated and by 1927 there were six newsreels—Pathé, Fox, Universal, Kinograms, Hearst and Paramount.

THE modern newsreel is generally divided into two major departments—assignment and make-up. The assignment department makes the pictures; the make-up department edits them for the screen.

An assignment editor has a set-up much like that of a newspaper. He has assistants who correspond roughly to the cable editors, wire editors and city editors, each watching a particular territory for news stories and assigning the cameramen in his province.



Most of the newsreels have working arrangements with one or another of the big news agencies, Associated Press, United Press or International News. A flash or an earthquake in India comes through. The cable editor sends a cable, moves a pin on a big map of the men around the world, and perhaps a cameraman climbs out of bed in Vienna and rushes off a thousand miles by plane for the disaster.

Once the film reaches New York, the make-up department takes it over. Dozens of stories arrive daily. The make-up editor and his assistants spend nearly the entire day in the showrooms, screening the material. What is considered the best is immediately selected for release in the newsreel. One man takes the negative and cuts it into a story. Another goes outside to his typewriter and writes the titles and off-stage lines for it. The film passes up to the synchronizing department. Here thousands of feet of original sound are catalogued and filed. Here you can find eight varieties of women's screams, one or a thousand Javanese talking, a hen cackling or a tri-motored plane with one motor missing. Where the original sound on the negative is good or where a speech has been recorded it is preserved. Where the original sound does not complement the story it is wiped out and new sound from the library added to replace it or augment the original.

At the same time, the off-stage voice commentator adds his lines, and his words carefully counted to synchronise with the action on the screen. Musical underlay is added if it will increase the effectiveness of the picture.

The whole is mixed in the right proportions by the monitor man and out comes a newsreel sound track. Working at really top speed, with practically a belt conveyor system, the process takes around six hours.

Once the finished negative is made, it is given to the laboratory for printing. Here is the really big time lag of newsreels over newspapers. With the highest speed printing equipment that it has been possible to devise, it takes a newsreel twenty-four hours to print its edition. A newsreel makes three to five hundred prints of each edition, or around a thousand prints a week. This compares with a hundred prints made of a feature picture. As each newsreel print is a thousand feet long it is easy to see that each newsreel company is turning out around a million feet of film a week. That is a lot of footage. The five newsreels go to about 16,000 theatres a week. They are seen by approximately eighty million people a week—and that is in this country alone.

Most of the American newsreels own or are associated with newsreels in England, on the Continent, South America, Africa, Australia and Japan. The material is shipped from this country on every boat leaving here. In Europe the offstage voice is added in the language of the country in which it is to be distributed. These foreign newsreels in turn are continually sending the films made abroad to this country. It is a tremendous world-wide news coverage and distribution, mainly controlled by the American reels. An American made newsreel picture may easily have a distribution double that of America alone, and will probably far outrun the distribution of the average feature picture.

The early newsreels went in for any pictures that could be grabbed on the run. For instance, the obvious pictorial matter, such as bathing beauties, battleships, baby shows, cornerstone layings, and marching troops. Unfortunately, they are still forced to turn to a certain amount of such material. The early producers discovered, however, when there wasn't any pictorial news, it was possible to create it. Pathé on its second issue was approached by a man who wanted to jump off a roof with a parachute. And while the jump was not a success, the picture was exciting. It looked like news—and that inaugurated the stunt period era.

Back in those days we used to make one or two stunt pictures a week. Why we didn't liquidate the entire breed of stunt men and get sued out of business by a suffering world, I don't know. In those days we used to roller skate along building ledges, slide across Broadway on tight ropes, ride over cliffs on motor-cycles, crash planes, land blimps on roofs, railroad trains, boats, lay smoke screens around anything and everything and go to any extremes that might prove exciting.

Wars were also exciting things that we pursued avidly. One enterprising Chicago firm is supposed to have paid Pancho Villa

PANCHO VILLA

*Cameraman secured this picture of Peons' idol by trick . . .*

$30,000 for the exclusive picture rights of his revolution. This firm is said to have insisted that his battles be fought to suit the photographic light and camera locations. Ever since we have chased wars, not entirely from a news point of view, but also from a pictorial one. As a result the tradition of the demon cameraman was built up—the Richard Harding Davis type who followed the wars around the world with leather puttees, reversed cap and a camera.

DURING these experimental years the tradition of tremendous rivalry between newsreels was built up. Back in those days no amount of money was too great to spend in reaching Broadway first with nearly any news picture. Planes, not one but two, three or four, would be used to insure getting the picture through. Special trains would be hired when the planes could not fly.

Do you remember back in 1928 when the German plane Bremen came down on Greenly Island off Labrador, after the first east to west trans-Atlantic flight? The newsreels spent as high as $20,000 for a few hours beat on Broadway with the story. One enterprising cameraman bought over $1,000 worth of gasoline as he flew down the Canadian coast, burning it as he purchased it so that his competitors could not get any and so refuel their planes and follow him through to Greenly Island.

ANYTHING SENSATIONAL

*Went after the Klu Klux Klan . . .*

Around the time of the depression, and President Roosevelt's first term, the newsreels started going broke. They discovered that while spending all this money was very exciting and lots of fun, at the same time the people in the theatres did not really care whether they saw the news picture in the theatre on Monday or Friday. They had already read about it in the newspapers and heard about it over the radio several days before.

The newsreels then started a period of experimenting. Some went on the idea that the people were poor and wanted dollar and cents news. We tried everything—learned studies by college professors, with animated diagrams as to why stocks went down and food prices up. We got long-winded comment from the man in the street who was not an authority but at the same time had a human intimacy. We studied the newspapers and picked up some of their crusades, going after the Klu Klux Klan, patent medicine manufacturers, prison labour—anything that was sensational.

Here is the problem the newsreels are faced with. They have the prerogatives of a news agency and hence the social obligations of a news disseminating organisation. At the same time, their audience will only accept their product if it is entertaining—good theatre. We are driven into the corner of having to combine the two factors, and our policy, as worked out roughly, has become, "Give as much real news as can really be interestingly told with motion pictures."

Actually, when we got right down to work and examined the problem, we found tremendous possibilities. We found that nearly any major problem in human relations has an angle of popular interest. Perhaps our coverage is a superficial one; perhaps we approach important social news from an entertainment rather than an educational one. But at least we tackle it, get it into the theatres and before the eyes of twenty-eight million people every week.

An obligation rests with the newsreels if they are to consider themselves a news medium. That is to edit the news, and to edit it with a far-sighted view to its ultimate effect on human relations. If we were purely an entertainment medium, we would run

anything that was exciting, spectacular or amusing.

I remember a number of years ago when the son of a wealthy department store owner in San Jose, California, was kidnapped and murdered. A couple of suspects were arrested and put in the San Jose jail. It was a tremendous story at the time, and with the assistance of the police, we picturised the story and re-enacted the kidnapping and how the man was thrown off the bridge and shot as he fell. It was a fair enough dramatisation of the circumstances, but I guess we just weren't very good editors—we had not realised the power and intimacy of the medium with which we were working. We rushed the pictures out. They reached the theatres in San Jose in time for the morning show. That very same night a mob battered down the San Jose jail and lynched those two suspects. We got the pictures of the lynching, too, but when we saw them we realised that we had failed miserably in our responsibility as editors.

A FEW weeks ago I had a 'phone call from our Chicago cameraman. He was about to leave for Indianapolis along with the rest of the opposition cameramen to cover the big auto races. They are always a sure-fire thrill and good entertainment and, as you know, practically routine coverage for every newsreel. Our cameraman wanted to go along with the gang—it's always a swell party—but he did begrudgingly mention that he had been out at the Republic Steel plant that day and things looked tough. Well, it was quite a gamble to take, but we pulled him off those auto races and sent him back to the steel plant. And in doing so we got a rather famous riot picture. We also got complaints from a good many thousands of people, on one side or the other. Finally, the entire situation pretty well crystallised in our minds a policy of editorial obligation.

Well, we made the riot story, screened it, and immediately realised the problem on our hands. Several paths were open to us. We could have killed the story and no one would have been the wiser. Newsreel film is tricky stuff to work with. Quite a lot is often no good and if it had been reported technically defective we would have been out of the jam.

Or, again, we could have simply gone along as entirely an entertainment medium and said that we had a spectacle like the assassination of a king, or a war, and released the story, letting the theatres run it or not, depending on whether it had box-office value in that particular community.

Instead, we got socially conscious. We realised that we had to assume the obligations of a news organisation. We had to act as editors and consider the ultimate consequences of what we released. We had to remember what had happened when we released that kidnapping picture.

*Extracted from a statement made by William P. Montague, Assignment Editor of Paramount News, at the Institute of Human Relations held under the auspices of the National Conference of Jews and Christians. Pictures: Page 3, London Films; others from Paramount newsreels.*

When we saw the picture that day we were as indignant as anyone. After all, we are all people who work for a living, and I suppose most people in the newsreel business, being former newspaper people, are moderately liberal. But we also sort of grew up and realised that we had a social duty in regard to our jobs.

Consider the situation at that time. The picture we had was a good picture, but not a great one. There have been better. It was its timeliness that made it dangerous. It was at the very climax of the steel strike. Seventy thousand men were out on strike, battling non-strikers in seven states at every morning and evening shift in the plants.

We had something which, if we let it go, would have blocked any peacable settlement of the steel strike. In fact, the bitterness and indignation it would have stirred up certainly would have led to added fighting. Out in the steel states—Michigan, Indiana, Illinois—there were bound to be riots in theatres which, perhaps, might even possibly have led to more deaths.

Paramount did not suppress the Chicago riot pictures. Instead, it voluntarily turned

*We got socially conscious . . .*

them over to the LaFollette Senate Committee investigating the situation, to make what use it could of them in behalf of public welfare. They immediately became part of the record of the proceedings, but in a way that insured no harm to the general public.

Senator LaFollette expressed his appreciation for the stand that Paramount had taken, and finally after the film had been used as evidence, recommended the release of the pictures. By that time the industrial situation had quieted down and there was no danger of riots developing, and Paramount sent the complete and unexpurgated pictures out to every one of its exchanges.

The riot pictures more or less crystallise the problem of the newsreels—are they to be wholly an entertainment medium or are they to assume their obligations as a news medium?

Our answer, when faced with the hard facts of being a theatrical medium, is that we must combine the two. We are a new news medium. We are working out a code of ethics of our own. While we are handicapped by the necessity of always being amusing and interesting, at the same time we believe we are successfully presenting to our audiences the world over their news situations and helping them interpret these problems in terms of sound human relationships.


# World Film News

AND TELEVISION PROGRESS
(INCORPORATING CINEMA QUARTERLY)

Vol. 2 No. 11 February 1938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Cover still: Wallace Beery in *Bad Man of Brimstone*


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# A Rather Spiritual Young Man Returns to Comedy

***Leslie Howard talks about his comic and tragic roles, and his part in the forthcoming film version of "Pygmalion"***

JUST off Hollywood Boulevard is the Columbia Broadcasting Company's Theatre. It was rehearsal time and on the bare stage was an orchestra, Eddie Cantor, Deanna Durbin, Bobby Breen and a host of technicians—and Leslie Howard. Behind a glass panel to the side were the engineers with headphones clamped to their ears and their eyes fixed on a large clock which dominated the untidy stage. To the extreme left with a microphone of his own sat an effects man surrounded by window frames, door frames, coconut shells, buckets of water, bells, cups and saucers ready to simulate any scene, or to imitate any sound.

Outside the Hollywood sun was blazing and inside it was stuffy and hot. Cantor was in his shirt sleeves, Howard in flannels mopped his brow while the others sagged in odd corners. Then Cantor jumped to life, and things began to happen. Little red lights flickered, the headphones were adjusted, the effects man grabbed a bucket, and Cantor began to rehearse. For the next three hours lines were read and re-read, gags were added and taken out again, and as the cast wilted into their seats, the script was sent back to the writers again. This was repeated at intervals for several days.

Cantor's half-hour programme is due on the air at 4 p.m. on Sunday. At 12.30, he has a public rehearsal when hundreds of people flock into the theatre. The show runs through and takes about 40 minutes. Everything is done as it will be when the show goes on the air.

About 1.20 the theatre is quiet again. The half-dozen who have clocked the laughs are sitting with Cantor re-editing the script. Only the gags which got 100 per cent laughs are left in. Slowly the 40 minutes show is trimmed down to 29 minutes 40 seconds. One of Cantor's jokes is right out; Howard has three new lines; Deanna has to sing an extra chorus for some of her lines have been cut. At 4 p.m. the public streams in again and the final show goes on the air—every line a winner. It runs to within the 20 seconds time margin. At 8 o'clock the show is repeated for the West Coast. Over 20 hours rehearsal, and several re-writings of the script for a half-hour on the air.

When I tracked Leslie Howard to his new office in the West End I reminded him of the day I had watched him rehearse with Cantor.

"Yes, we certainly did work hard."

"Harder than you have to work at the B.B.C.?"

"Well, it is difficult to say that, because I have only played straight parts at the B.B.C. —Hamlet, for example—and then it was rather a matter of adaptation. We weren't really making something new, we were making something old and proved fit the limits of radio. But I rather think that the American radio people do put more into their type of show than we do into ours, for they are doing a different thing really. They are making a new type of entertainment by exploiting their medium. They are not adapting old ideas to a new form; they are creating a new idea out of the nature of their medium. They are not afraid of the studio or of the medium. They romp in and make the studio and the microphones do things—sometimes very novel and exciting things. They do not try to hide the fact that they are on the radio, but rather to make that part of the appeal.

"But it is interesting to see how formalised this new type of entertainment is becoming. This is best appreciated if you consider the audiences who come to watch these broadcasts. They have quite ceased to be astonished at the sight of an actor reading from a script, and to see the players, other than the principals, sitting in a straight line along the stage and only rising to say their lines. You will remember that practically no gestures are used, and there is absolutely no dramatic movement on the stage. The audiences have become accustomed to this. They no longer laugh at the effects man opening and shutting his windows. The actors feel this too. It is a new medium which has already conventions of its own. I think the Americans do more original work within these conventions, because they exploit the medium more, because they rehearse more, and probably harder—and because they have more money to spend. The last is perhaps the most important. They can afford the best of everybody—directors, actors, writers—all the time."

"Did you do Shakespeare on the American radio?"

"Yes, I did Benedick in *Much Ado* in Columbia's Shakespeare series, but except for the fact that the play was cut to fit the hour, the technique was pretty much as it would have been at the B.B.C. It is in the new kinds of entertainment that American radio is most significant, and they seem to do more with new material than we do here."

"And now, Mr. Howard, I'm going to ask you the question that everybody is asking you?"

"Yes, I know, you are going to ask me what made me become a comedian: you are going to ask me, have I suffered a spiritual change? Or are you going to suggest that I am now back again in the fold doing the things we all like, after letting the side down rather badly by trying to be a highbrow? One paper really did say that, you know."

"Well, my question was going to be something like that."

"It's very funny really. Everybody is talking about me 'switching' from drama to comedy. All the critics made the point. It just shows, I suppose, how short the public memory is. A few years ago I was known only as a comedian. My first stage successes were in comedies. I was playing in *Her Cardboard Lover* when I read *Berkeley Square*. I liked it very much and wanted to play it. But no one would believe I could be anything but a comedian. But we wangled it somehow, and the play, as you know, became very popular. I played it on the screen, and there followed a series of parts which transformed a one-time comedian into a rather spiritual young man. *The Petrified Forest*, *Of Human Bondage* and *Romeo and Juliet* completed the transformation and the comedian was forgotten.

"When Warner Bros. proposed another film there was not a suitable story available, at least not a drama requiring a soulful young man. I suggested a comedy, and the old situation came up the other way round. Once again I had been fitted into a nice little water-tight compartment and typed as a romantic actor. No one could imagine me as a comedian. But I liked one story particularly, so *It's Love I'm After* was made. It was, as you know, a success, so we followed on with *Stand In*. This story was originally not a comedy at all, but Warner Bros. were now quite happy in the idea that I could be a comedian, so the script was re-written and cast as a comedy. It so happened that *Stand In* reached London before *It's Love I'm After*, but actually it came into being as I have said."

"And the next venture is *Pygmalion?*"

"Yes, and this time I am going to have a hand in the direction. Anthony Asquith and I will co-direct, and I will play Professor Higgins. It is still difficult for an actor in Hollywood to take any real part in the production. Every aspect of production is so self-contained, and there is so little come and go between writers, directors, and editors, that the best they can do is to become as expert as they can in their own limited field. It is the only way they can make any impression on the finished picture. And the same is true of the actor. The only impression he can make on a film is through his acting. He can have little effect on the people who work in these other air-tight compartments. But in England production is not so rigid, and I am going to try to contribute something more than I can through just acting."

"And who else is in the cast with you?"

"There's Wendy Hiller who did such good work in the original cast of *Love on the Dole*. She will, of course, play Eliza, and Wilfred Lawson will play Alfred Dolittle. Lawson has been getting great praise for his work in *I Have Been Here Before*, and I am sure he will be grand as the dustman."

I know he will, for the first time I saw *Pygmalion* about 15 years ago—Wilfred Lawson was Alfred Dolittle. I look forward to seeing what 15 years have done to Mr. Lawson's Dolittle, what Leslie Howard will do to Professor Higgins, and what time and the cinema will have done to *Pygmalion*.

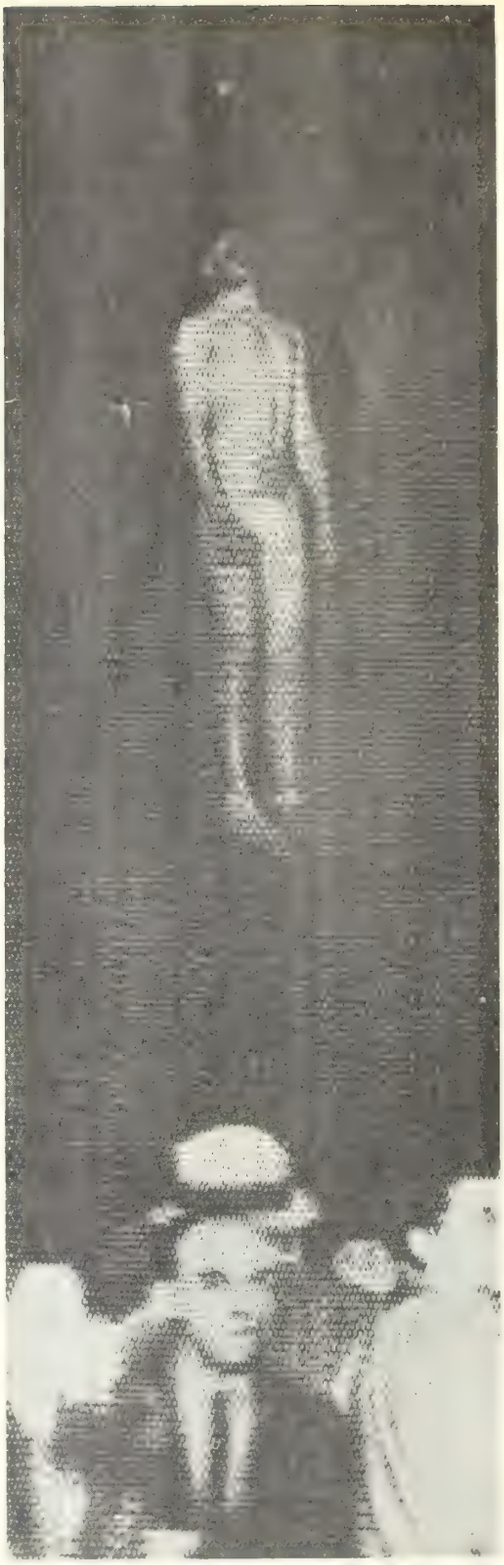
Thomas Baird.

*Pictures:* TOP LEFT—"*It's Love I'm After*" (*Warner Bros.*). BOTTOM LEFT—"*Berkeley Square*" (*Fox*). ABOVE—"*The Scarlet Pimpernel*" (*London Films*).

# The *MOB* Still *RIDES*

*by*

## Russell Ferguson



*All night a bright and solitary star*
*Hung pitifully o'er the swinging char.*
*Day dawned, and soon the mixed crowds came to view*
*The ghastly body swaying in the sun:*
*The women thronged to look, but never a one*
*Showed sorrow in her eyes of steely blue;*
*And little lads, lynchers that were to be,*
*Danced round the dreadful thing in fiendish glee.*
CLAUDE McKAY.

**THEY WON'T FORGET . . . outstanding general release film of the month, pictures the prejudice, hatred and fear that fosters lynchings.**

THE South is not what it used to be. In the course of 1937 there were about sixty necktie parties, but they only got eight Negroes altogether. In comparison with previous years, this is to be regarded as a poor score.

The trouble is, seemingly, that the militia or the National Guard or other interfering busybodies are getting the prisoner out of the jail before the mob gets in. This is very vexing. What could be more annoying than to turn out, along with a few hundred others, pleasantly lit up and raring to go, with adequate supplies of gasolene, kerosene and other combustibles, side irons and plenty of ammunition, only to discover that there is nobody to burn? When you have invited all your friends, and the sheriffs and deputies of neighbouring counties are there to see fair play and make sure the thing is done right, it is very disappointing to find that somebody has let you down and the show is off.

For think of all the things you can do to a Negro, once you feel that the law is with you, in the person of gun-toting deputies and prominent citizens. You can shoot him or hang him. This is quite good in its way, but it does not last very long, and strictly speaking it is sound practice to begin by torturing him with a blow-lamp, or cutting bits off him. There are more spectacular variations. One very good lynching, a year or two back, took the form of burning a schoolhouse, with the Negro chained on the roof. It was in the schoolhouse that he committed the crime, so the execution was not without poetic quality. Of course he was guilty.

Every person lynched is guilty. He may, of course, be innocent of the crime he is accused of, but if so he is guilty of something else. If he is a Negro, there is no need to split hairs, because the nature of the Negro is such that if he did not commit the crime, he nearly did, or at least he might have, and in any case he was just about to commit another crime which was even worse. In all doubtful cases, the execution settles the matter for good and all, because when once the man is dead, the great principle can be quoted that he must have been guilty or he would not have been lynched.

In the maintenance of justice on these lines, the people of the South have a great record to keep up. Over and over again they have done the right thing, when the law has shilly-shallied, or even acquitted the prisoner. In many instances, prompt action has prevented the possibility of a re-trial, with its attendant danger of acquittal. Many times, too, convictions have been secured by packing the courthouse with Klansmen and forcing the judge at the pistol point to give the proper verdict and sentence.

Again, it is easy to show that lynching parties have prevented many more crimes than they have punished. When a party is looking for a murderer, it frequently disposes of one or two suspicious Negro characters on the way. This means, of course, that these Negroes will not commit crimes any more. They may, or may not, have done anything wrong before their execution, but one thing is certain, they will do nothing wrong after it. On purely logical grounds, it is quite clear that the only sure way of preventing a man from committing an offence is to kill him before he gets the chance.

There are no words to describe the horrible crimes which have been prevented in this way. Think of it. About five thousand people, mainly Negroes, have been lynched in America since they started keeping the score. Each one of them was a criminal (or he would not have been lynched) and might have gone on for years and years, committing heaven knows what, had he been suffered to live. Reflecting

on this, we realise the great service rendered to American society by the grand old lynching tradition.

LYNCHING serves society, also, in more indirect ways. Many of the crimes for which men have been lynched are such as the courts would punish with a very light sentence, if indeed they punished at all. Such crimes, for instance, as passing for white, looking in at bedroom windows, self-defence, resisting arrest, writing insulting letters, arguing about motor-cars, or asking for payment of accounts. These offences should not be dismissed with light sentences, for the whole question of racial relations is at stake. Negroes must be kept in their place, or they will form trade-unions, co-operative societies, and other dangerous bodies. They are especially difficult to keep down when they have become prosperous and bought property which they refuse to sell below market prices.

This was their condition some years ago in an Oklahoma town, in which an incident took place which taught them a lesson they will not readily forget. The citizens were desirous of lynching a Negro boy, and a small party of Negroes so far forgot their place as to offer to help the sheriff to defend his prisoner. The sheriff very properly refused, and as the Negroes left his office they found themselves confronted by a few hundred citizens. The Negroes at once made a violent attack on the crowd, and then ran away to their own quarter of the town. Five thousand citizens, armed with machine-guns, revolvers, kerosene, gasolene, shot-guns and aircraft surrounded the Negro quarter on all sides, and a Negro riot commenced. Led by ex-officers of the American army, the citizens fought all night against the vicious Negroes, and destroyed forty-four blocks of Negro property. This is the kind of thing that happens when Negroes get out of hand.

And now all this is passing. It is a great loss, for, in a real sense, lynchings are social festivals which provide outings for all members of the family. In many parts, lynching bees are the only major excitement that poor communities enjoy. Women like them, children love them, and there are many thousands of women and children who have never had the opportunity of setting a courthouse on fire or throwing bottles at the militia. If the South continues to degenerate, they never will.

AND yet, even to-day, many incidents occur which show that the manly spirit of the South is not yet dead. All is not lost. From time to time, strikers and labour organisers are tarred and feathered, communists are flogged, miners' houses are burned down.

*Above : Planters, armed with sticks and whips, mounting cars to pursue and terrorise striking share croppers*

*Left : Planters seizing clergyman to flog him. (Stills from "The March of Time")*

It is evident that the spirit of the mob is still there. In the old days, they used to kill their man. Nowadays, more frequently, they only half-kill him and then he dies. If he is a labour leader or a communist, he must have known perfectly well what he would get, and thus it is practically suicide.

So these incidents are not lynchings, in the old sense. It is difficult to know what to call them. A recent report says that "the proper classification of these cases is under consideration." The final judgment will be interesting, and may have an important bearing upon the score for 1938.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# HOWDY DEATH!

## Glad to meet you

*GLEN NORRIS commentates on some exciting adventures in which well-known cameramen have faced death in search of newsreel pictures.*

WE'RE on the golf course at Old Orchard Beach, in the U.S. State of Maine. Outside the clubhouse a small crowd is looking up at something that's very much like an enormous cluster of grapes. Actually 30 small hydrogen-filled balloons bobbing and tugging at their lines in a sharpish breeze. Where the lines come down to earth, they're attached to a parachute harness which at the moment is being adjusted round Paramount newsreel cameraman Al Mingalone. In his 33 years, tall, weather beaten Mingalone has taken many a risk for a screen news story; lashed to a submarine's periscope while the "sub" was below the surface—all except the periscope; from the top of "Endeavour's" mast—170 feet above the deck—while the yacht was heeling from side to side; and on the carrier of a motor-cycle acrobat doing his "act" on the Wall of Death.

* * *

Compared to those, to-day's stunt doesn't promise so much of a thrill. Al has discovered that you can buy 30 small balloons for £10 . . . that makes this just about the cheapest way of individual flying. The balloons almost exactly balance his weight . . . so when he takes a jump he goes up, up and over the trees . . . and when it comes to taking a picture in a crowd, that sort of jump is mighty useful! But what if the wind catches him and carries him up? Oh! That's O.K. . . . one end of a 200 ft. cord is tied round Al's waist . . . and his friend, Catholic priest Father James Mullen, is holding the other end.

They're all set. He takes a run . . . and . . . the wind whips him up like a rocket . . . a hundred feet . . . a hundred and fifty . . . nearly two hundred . . . the cord is pulling tight . . . Father Mullen has tied it to his car as anchorage . . . here comes the jerk . . . its broken!!! One of the club caddies jumps for the trailing end of the line . . . but as he grabs it he stumbles and misses. Father Mullen is dashing off to his nearby house for his rifle . . . the Father is a crack shot, and if he can pot a couple of those balloons it may save Mingalone from a visit to the stratosphere. Everyone is shouting and rushing about . . . there's just one man keeping calm, and that's Mingalone . . . he's got his camera focussed, and he's grinding out a picture of all the people trying to save him! But by the time the Father comes back with his gun, Al is just a speck against a dark rain cloud . . . and now he's gone . . . right into the clouds at 2,500 feet . . . and here comes the rain . . . will he get wet!

We're in Father Mullen's car, heading East . . . that's the way Mingalone was going . . . hey! look out, Father! keep your eye on the road! leave the sky-watching to us . . . no sign of him yet. But what's that just beyond those trees . . . step on it, Father . . . yes, it's Mingalone . . . the rain must have soaked his clothes and increased his weight . . . now he's skimming along at 600 feet. We get ahead of him . . . Father Mullen leaps from the car, and up goes his rifle . . . missed. Two balloons at the second shot . . . it's all over . . . Al is coming down. But now he's taking a hand

himself . . . with his pocket knife between his teeth he's trying to climb up to a ring five feet above his head to cut loose some more balloons . . . the way he's struggling, he must be frozen stiff . . . he's getting tangled in the trailing anchor line . . . he's dropped his camera . . . now he's 12 lbs. lighter, and before the Father can take another shot . . . he's up and off again.

Back into the car . . . dodging the traffic in a tough race with the wind driven balloons . . . and every light seems to be at red. Some drivers are calling out that the wind is shifting . . . and that he's heading towards the sea. It's fifteen miles of hooting and crashing gears before a scared Father Mullen catches up with the bobbing balloonist, now only 200 feet up. Again the Father jumps from the car, again he shoots . . . and that's all that's needed to bring the exhausted, dripping, shivering Mingalone back to earth.

But what does the top end of the adventure think about it? Here he is a few hours later at the microphone of station WABC: "Well, I guess I've had more thrills than the man on the flying trapeze. When I was up the mast of the 'Endeavour' I knew that one slip would fling me into the Atlantic. When I was in the Cuban revolt I thought the mob would beat me. When I was tied to that submarine periscope I thought I might have to cut loose and swim for it. But I never thought before that my last hour had come. That was the way this time, and maybe you'll get some of it when you see the pictures I took up there. I guess if I was smart I'd quit this game; but this 'anywhere for a newstory' kind'a life gets in your blood."

**The Sinking Panay . . . 450 tons of International Incident (G.B. News)**

WE are at the great American naval air base, at Lakehurst, New Jersey. . . . It is the twilight of a May evening. . . . The great silver envelope of the Hindenburg roars slowly down over the landing field. . . . Newsreel cameramen make final adjustments . . . focus lenses . . . swing cameras upwards. Among them is William Deeke, of Pathé News. As the great ship's long lines are dropped . . . Deeke swings down to the ground crew . . . and then . . .

Just an hour later, a sweaty, sooty Deeke tells his own story: "The big ship was floating within my view-finder, and everything seemed right as the spring evening could make it. And then . . . the explosion. At that very moment, the motor of my camera went dead. I clutched frantically at the crank handle and turned the whole scene by hand.

"The horror was so terrific that my hand and my whole body shook violently. I expect you will be able to see the shake in the pictures. The dramatic impact of the disaster was so swift, so stunning, that I had no time to feel either compassion or fear. Not until afterwards.

"But thirty seconds of the twilight of May 6th are scorched into my memory for ever."

JAPAN'S army is making its final assault on China's capital, Nanking . . . bombs crash . . . shells whine . . . machine guns splutter . . . rifles ping . . . death drives across the city in a sweeping wave. All British and American citizens have evacuated the city . . . no, not quite all . . . with the roar of war just behind them, three men are dragging heavy cases down the shell-smashed road along the bank of the Yangtze river. You can tell from the shape of the cases that inside are cameras, tripods, and tins of film . . . for these are newsreelmen . . . Norman Alley of Universal, Eric Mayell of Movietone . . . and Paul Alley of Gaumont-British (Norman and Paul are nothing more than a coincidence). They've seen enough of death . . . they're not waiting for the triumphal Japanese entry into the stricken city. But how to get away? Suddenly, round a bend in the river, they see an American gunboat heading upstream . . . frantically they wave and shout from the shore . . . the passing gunboat puts off a motor sampan and picks them up. A few minutes later, thankful for their rescue, Mayell and the two Alleys are climbing up the side of the U.S.S. "Panay". . . .

In London, at the G.B. office, a cable arrives from Paul Alley. . . .

### WESTERN UNION WIRE

We are standing on the deck of the Panay patrolling the swirling Yangtze intent on saving lives imperilled by the holocaust of war STOP As these scenes are filmed we are about 15 miles from Nanking to avoid shellfire STOP A Japanese launch approaches to verify our nationality which is obvious from our large ensign and two huge horizontal American flags spread across the decks so we should be safe even in this perilous zone STOP No such luck STOP Three and half hours later we are suddenly under attack by Japanese airmen STOP Panay's machine guns go into action but Japanese bombers stay out of range STOP Diving in relays of two and three they shatter Panay with about twenty-four direct hits STOP Panay sinking order given to abandon ship STOP Out of seventy-six aboard score are wounded two dying STOP There is absolutely no panic STOP Two small boats take turns in making for land STOP Skipper with wounded leg in last boat spots lone swimmer, probably sailor blown from ship by violence of explosions STOP We hide in reeds on small muddy island as two low flying Japanese planes have been cruising about STOP We don't know that they're still after us but are taking no chances all are fearful of further attack STOP From reeds we film scene of shipwreck and disaster STOP Out in river Panay slowly settles STOP She is being machine gunned and boarded by Japanese in launch STOP They leave her and we watch her founder beneath muddy waters of Yangtze STOP It was impossible beach her as her steam boiler had been ruptured STOP Her flag goes under less than two and half hours since first Japanese plane sighted STOP Executive Officer Lieut Anders shot in mouth unable speak gives orders in writing as small boats carry survivors to main bank STOP Now we film scenes on road to Hohsien three miles from river STOP Stretcher bearers worn out by shock made slow progress with wounded STOP At Hohsien Chinese show great kindness care consideration place every facility at our disposal at local hospital STOP By nightfall we are ready push on to Hanshan where we get word that British gunboats have come to rescue STOP Final scenes

anghai harbour as
rescue flotilla arrives and US
Augusta awaits heroes of
Yangtze STOP Japanese war-
p offers boats to take off
survivors but they refuse pre-
ferring remain under protection
of our own flag STOP As dusk
deepens into darkness curtain
s on grave international
incident STOP Happy new Year STOP
PAUL ALLEY STOP 433PM END

BACK in Nanking . . . as Japan pounds at the city walls, the capital is literally being torn to pieces with high explosives . . . the unholy roar sounds as if hell has come out to play. In a once quiet and dignified city suburb stands the British owned Yangtze Hotel . . . with all other whites, its manager has been ordered to leave . . . he *has* left . . . its staff of Chinese servants cowers in the cellars, fearful of death from the sky . . . but wait a minute . . . there's someone on the flat hotel roof . . . wow . . . its a cameraman . . . and he's shooting . . . why, he must be crazy . . . that's what they've been telling him for years . . . he just says "Maybe they're right!" . . . carries on. He's Arthur Menken, hard working, much travelled son of one of New York's leading society hostesses . . . but more important, he's the uncrowned king of Paramount's roving cameras. While his colleagues Paul and Norman Alley, and Eric Mayell (see above) are on their way up the Yangtze in the "Panay," he has stayed behind . . . he must be the last white man in the city . . . doesn't that prove he's crazy! Now he's shooting the final Japanese bombardment . . . in a few minutes he'll be away down the road to scoop the world on Japan's army marching into the Chinese capital.

When Menken arrived in Nanking, nearly two months ago, he chose to stay at the Yangtze Hotel because its roof commanded a grand view of the railroad station . . . he guessed that was what the Jap bombers would make for. On his rooftop perch he is just about a mile away from the station . . . close enough, but not too close! News comes through that the bombers are on their way . . . Menken's camera is loaded and ready . . . up he goes on to the roof . . . he's all set . . . here comes the attacking squadron . . . they're over the station . . .GOSH, they've passed it and are heading this way . . . suddenly Menken realises . . . they're not making for the railway, but for the million dollar Hsiankwan power station which makes all Nanking's electricity . . . *and the power house is just three hundred yards from the hotel!!!* In the next hour, Menken, with his eyes glued to his camera view-finder, sees a Japanese plane dive straight down vertically on the power house . . . almost crashing into the building at full throttle before releasing its bombs for two direct hits and zooming up again . . . while another plane, hit by a Chinese gun, crashes in a white puff of smoke (see picture).

Back in New York, Mrs. Menken gets one of those nice chatty letters from son Arthur . . . let's hope she can take it! . . .:—"The first few bombs went wide of the mark, splashing into ponds between the power house and the hotel—too close for comfort but . . . very nice for pictures. The following planes . . . dropped three eggs directly on the structure. . . . The Chinese anti-aircraft . . . brought down a plane directly in front of the building. It was impossible to get more than just the actual crash, because things were happening entirely too fast. A little later I got on to the roof of the Central High School near the hospital: This time the Jap planes headed smack for the hospital. Suddenly the leader went into a power dive and pointed directly where I was standing. Two bombs dropped from the plane, and I could hear them coming for the building with that terrible whishing sound that says, 'This is Arthur's! This is Arthur's!'. I ducked behind a door just in time. My car, by the gate, was punctured by fragments in five places . . . P.S. I'm under suspicion of espionage or something by the Chinese for being on the spot for both bombings; and then the Japs confiscated my films of their march into the city. But when I told them it was a record of a great victory, they gave 'em back."

**Arthur Menken**

That is the climax to the most daring and dangerous period of Menken's life. How's this for a record of Action with a capital A:— In 1935, the heat and dust of war in Ethiopia . . . the constant fear of tropical disease, of being stabbed in the back by a dark skinned tribesman . . . thirst and dirty food . . . vermin ridden rooms in native villages where a white man is an enemy. In 1936, war in Spain . . . the siege of the Alcazar . . . wounded, he carries on, the only newsreelman to film the raising of the siege . . . then charged by Franco with sending out uncensored material . . . ordered to leave Spain, and never return. In 1937, the U.S. flood disaster . . . shooting from a tiny boat that twice is almost swamped by the swirling waters . . . riots in the motor and steel strikes . . . the air whistling with flying bricks . . . and now, war in China.

To him, and to all the world's roving news cameras, fate and their work puts them on death's trail wherever he is. Howdy, Death, glad to meet you.

**"This is Arthur's! This is Arthur's!" (Paramount News)**

The next number of "World Film News" will contain an exciting and amusing article on the adventures of Pathe's cameraman. Richard Butler, whilst filming the Spanish War.

# 200,000 Feet on FOULA

## Michael Powell's account of the filming of "The Edge of the World" reviewed by John Taylor

Is there, in the film business, a man who speaks the truth? Is there a man who can tell a story without glossing over the direct, without enlarging the glories. There have been many stories of film trips to far parts, told by cameramen and prop men, directors and sound men, told while hanging over bars, while sitting in hotels, while waiting for the sun. But I doubt if they ever told the true story even to their wives in the secrecy of the bed chamber where even in the film business nothing but the truth is supposed to be told. Is it possible that from these men will come one who does not only speak the truth but writes it—no of course it is not—but all the the same I feel uneasy—is the film business losing its grip? Are there weaklings amongst us—men who will say: "They gave me £500" and did get £500. Men who will say: "Don't be silly, that was only a publicity stunt."

A week ago I could have said, "We are safe boys"—no one will say there is an honest man in the business—that is if they are honest themselves—but now, as I said, I feel uneasy and suspicious, for out of our jungle has come a document, which rings. Even the title 200,000 *Feet on Foula* sounds like the truth, for who ever heard anyone tell the true footage? But I hold in reserve that Powell either did shoot 200,000 feet, is an honest man and a traitor to all true expedition men, or that he shot 500,000 feet, is the biggest and best liar amongst us, and a credit to us all. I hold this reserve because long experience has taught me to be cautious about these things.

At the moment I am on horns and so will you be when you read the book. Take for example what Powell says about his girl friend Frankie who worked on the film. "I have always failed to understand a film director or stage producer, who uses his position to give a friend a job." Followed by "Not a soul should know that we were engaged or anything more to each other than director and actress" and then "Only I myself, could weigh all the reasons why Frankie had to play the part." And they called him honest John. Ease the weight on to the other horn for he continues: "During the production of the film I would treat her exactly as I treated any other member of the company." You may say "God help the company." But Powell tends to ram it down your throat by, "The experienced onlooker will smile at this ruthless decision and indeed at the whole situation, for he knows very well what will happen"—but Powell is not thinking what you are, for his concern is the difficulty of directing his girl friend. When you get a man who says these things about himself and his one and only, what can you do but be uneasy and hope that he doesn't feel the same about the more serious things in life? But as you go through the book you realise that he does feel the same about the more serious things. The first cameraman on the film had never shot an exterior picture before and shot wide open using the shutter to control the exposure—entirely the director's responsibility, but Powell, and I do not like it, gives the lurid details, even the cameraman's name. Is there no honour amongst honest men? Apart from this, the book is the best description of film making I have read, the details of contact making, the amount of preparation, the waiting for the sun, the rush to finish the film, the producers demand that the unit should come back with an unfinished picture, the picture almost finished, and then a head office man forcing the unit back to London. One thing comes out of the book and that is that the making of a film like *The Edge of the World* is a specialised job. That a studio director requires an assistant director and a cameraman who have done the work before.

Anyone thinking of going into the film business would do well to read the book. Anyone in the business thinking of making a film on similar lines should read it, for out of it come a dozen points. Is it good to take your wife or girl with you? Is it good to run a unit on democratic lines, and when it is finished is it good to write a book about it? Maybe. On the whole this book has a good feeling about it. The unit seemed to work well together and with the people of the island, but I hold to my reserve for occasionally a false note is hit; when Powell brings back a Shetland Islander to be his man servant. Maybe it is just as right to bring back an islander to be your man servant as it is to bring back someone from Southwark. What kind of man is a man servant anyway? So I hold my reserve and say Powell is possibly the biggest and best liar of us all.

("200,000 *Feet on Foula*", *by Michael Powell. Faber and Faber*, 12*s.* 6*d.*)

# HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE

***Motion Pictures and the Legion of Decency*** **was the title. The spokesman was the Fr. Gerald B. Donnelly, S.J. Extracted from a session's proceedings at the Institute of Human Relations, held at William's College, Mass., under the auspices of the National Conference of Jews and Christians.**

"Song of Songs" (*Paramount*)

I HAVE been directed to confine myself strictly to one subject—namely, the work and results of the Legion of Decency.

I believe that the most graphic way to describe its accomplishment is to remind you of the type of entertainment being purveyed by the film theatres just before the Legion swung into action in 1934.

As the year 1933 opened, picture circles were agog over Paramount's announced intention to film *Sanctuary*, a story of rape, prostitution and related subjects. During January, the public was treated to a series of tropical scenics in which the fauna and flora were almost wholly neglected for camera studies of native women unclothed above the waist. *Goona Goona* led off the series, its incidents strung together by a plot embracing aphrodisiac drugs, rape and revenge. *Virgins of Bali* followed, another anatomical scenic dealing with the remarkable wardrobes of tropical women. On top of this came *Love Potion*, a third romance of native toxicology and nudity.

This cycle of bared-chest drama meanwhile encouraged one producer to go a bit farther. He filmed *This Naked Age*, a story of love in an American nudist colony.

Meanwhile Warners launched *Frisco Jenny*. It roused vigorous protest from people who thought that entertainment for the masses should be reticent on the subject of sex.

But, unfortunately, it was just at this time that Paramount chose to release *She Done Him Wrong*, Miss Mae West's first film-starring vehicle. Miss West proved to be a singer, and the state censors, charmed with her voice, overlooked the rough spots in one of her lyrics having the innocent title, "The Man Who Took His Time".

Paramount's *No Man of Her Own* contributed a new study of the unhappy small-town girl made happy—or at least well housed, well dressed and well fed—by the handsome adventurer from the big city. Because this film emphasised the fact that the wages of sin are sometimes (as the films themselves say) "the pretty things a woman loves", it irritated that large body of citizens whom Hollywood was then calling the "blue noses". Its advertisements glorifying Clark Gable as "the man who made strong women weak" annoyed them still more.

The lechery of a fanatic monk and his two attempts at rape were the motivation of *Rasputin*, Metro-Goldwyn's vehicle for the Barrymores. *Parachute Jumper*, with Doug. Fairbanks, Jr., outraged many of the customers by its salacious lines and incidents.

People wondered how *Hot Pepper*, which Fox concocted at this time, could have passed the industry's censor. A rowdy farce with Boccaccian dialogue, it climaxed in a scene of progressive undress by the heroine, plainly taken over from the burlesque theatres.

*Animal Kingdom* began its run, showing quite charmingly that a man's mistress can be his more truly than the women he married.

Then Cecil DeMille came out with *The Sign of the Cross*, a religious spectacle which featured a dance that was not only explicitly erotic but which dared for the first time in the history of the public screen to introduce the

note of homosexuality. Columbia followed with *Child of Manhattan*, a tear-drenched drama in which the heroine justified her incontinence by pleading passionately, "But don't you see, mother, I love him, I love him". The same moral principle—that deep human affection is adequate excuse for sin—was preached to the patrons by a magnificent version of *Farewell to Arms*, starring Miss Helen Hayes.

Paramount, which in 1930 had signed the code and admitted its responsibility for entertainment tending to improve the race, next released Marlene Dietrich's *The Blonde Venus*, which improved nobody.

The idea that adultery is a slight and amusing adventure and one that any understanding wife should easily forgive was the thesis of *Cynara*, a Broadway drama taken over by the Warners. In the same Borther's penitentiary saga called *Ladies they Talk About*, there were a number of frank references to the starved physical instincts of the prisoners, and a group of highly offensive witticisms by an aged prostitute who should not have been in the film at all.

*The Half Naked Truth*, RKO's comedy, indulged a number of smutty references which caused public comment, and Universal's opus, *The Cohens and the Kellys*, contained bits of dialogue distinctly not for family trade.

Shortly afterwards the same company broke out with *Love Birds* which was a great deal worse. A bride-and-groom story, it featured several ribald situations and plenty of off-colour lines. The content and tone of *They Just Had to Get Married*, put out a little later by the same studio, were just what you imagine they were.

Some interesting story purchases were announced just about this time. One company bought *Shanghai Gesture*, a pornographic drama which had created a bit of a squall on Broadway. Paramount acquired *Jennie Gerhardt*, one of Theodore Dreiser's human documents. And also *The Great Magoo*, a bawdy comedy from Times Square that even the newspaper critics had gagged at. M.G.M. took on a tale disturbingly called *Our Moral Standards*. And a bulletin announced the purchase of *Design for Living*, a play that conflicted just about 100 per cent with the design for producing set down by the production code.

By this time Fox's *State Fair* was at the height of its run. An excellent story. But the film introduced a new device—a whole sequence of camera shots symbolising seduction and a shadowgraph of what I might call its climax. One of these devices was immediately seized upon by RKO in its production of *Christopher Strong*, in which the lovely Katharine Hepburn played an unmarried heroine who chose suicide as the most heroic way out of her biological dilemma.

Paramount's *Pick-Up* continued the trend to lecherous lines. *Sailor's Luck* had to be operated on for coarseness. Warner's *Central Airport* bore down heavily on the salacious with its bedroom and disrobing scenes. M.G.M.'s *The Barbarian* was a sheik romance in which sleeping arrangements in the desert were the centre of interest.

*Forty-Second Street* had excised from it what was probably the dirtiest joke in screen history. Joan Crawford appeared in her fourth or fifth story about tangled sex relations. M.G.M.'s *Hell Below* opened with a seduction scene and was punctuated with rowdy dialogue. Maurice Chevalier's *A Bed Time Story* was not for tots. *Reunion in Vienna* was licensed.

*Good-bye Again*, Warner's new release, argued that a good man should be faithful to his mistress and not go gadding about with other women. *Baby Face*, a convincing essay on feminine success through promiscuity, was so convincing that it was condemned to the cooler.

So there we have some forty-odd films, current or projected in 1933. I have merely selected them as samples. To be sure there were many more of the same type. But these will serve to remind you of the topics and tone of the screen before the revolution.

I SHOULD like to insist, though, that ridding the screen of obscenities and indecencies was only a secondary object of the Legion. The chief purpose of the movement was to rid the screen of morally subversive stories—stories that lowered traditional moral standards, that persuaded people, and especially the young, to accept false principles of conduct.

By the traditional standards of morality I mean such principles of conduct as the following: Murder is wrong; stealing is wrong; perjury is wrong. These standards, together with many relating to sex, follow from the code of right and wrong written into the consciences of men by God, Himself, and have been generally known and accepted during all of the centuries by Christians, Jews, pagans and men of no religious affiliation.

Our leaders felt that any attack made upon these principles—be it an argumentative attack, as in a book of philosophy, or an emotional attack, as in a drama—was a vicious thing, destructive of the social good, and to be vigorously combatted all the more so when the attack was being made in so persuasive and popular medium as the films.

Our leaders found along about 1930 or so that the films had climbed into the pulpit and were preaching the most subversive type of moral theses.

I certainly do not mean to accuse Hollywood of deliberately attempting to break down the traditional standards of morality. That would be a charge most unfair and wholly untrue. A new field of story materials had been opened to the screen by the perfection of the sound picture, and the producers were merely using these new materials, and not at all engaged in a deep plot against public morals.

Let me, in conclusion, ask you to compare the screen fare of 1933 with that of the present.

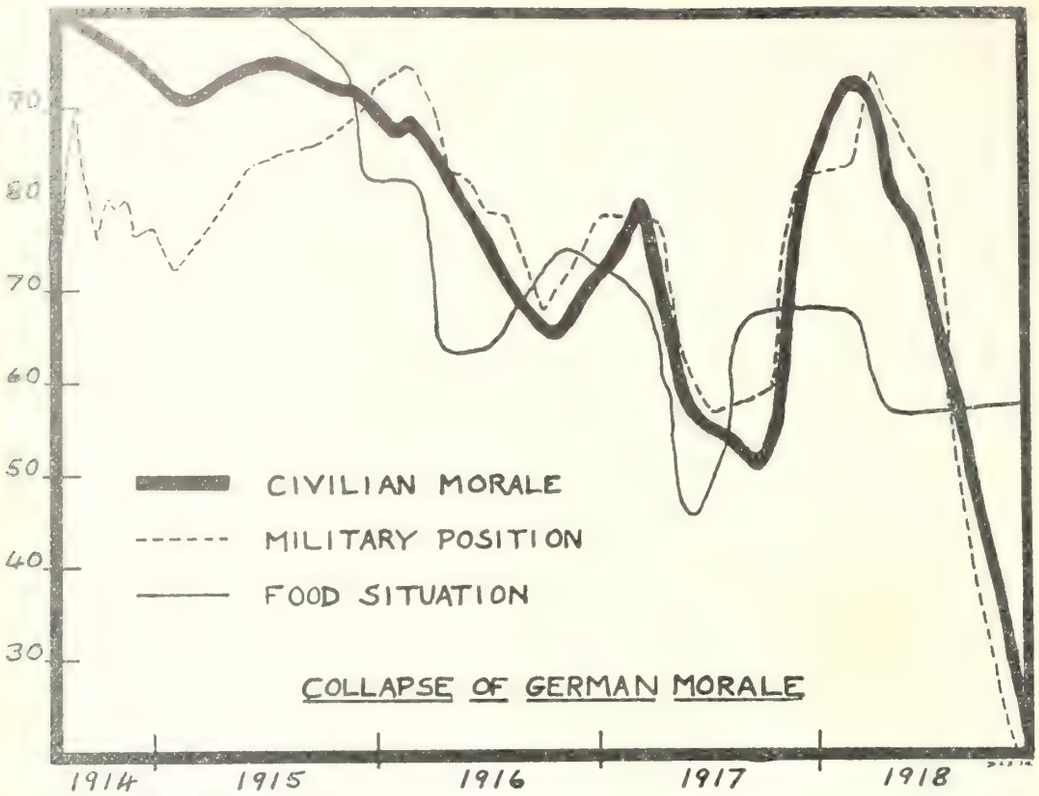
Gone are the dirty jokes that fouled nearly every film of the pre-Legion days. Gone are the disrobing scenes that touched that year an all-time low. Gone are the Ostermoor philanderings of *The Smiling Lieutenant* tradition. There are no reluctant seductions, as in *Morning Glory*. No shadowgraph adulteries, as in *State Fair*. No bawdy burlesques, of the *Warrior's Husband* school. No pregnancy tear-jerkers as in *Eight Girls in a Boat*.

I estimate that the industry this year is experiencing the greatest financial success in its history. The films are playing to packed houses here and abroad. But in none of them is the hero a glamorous gangster or admirable rebel against the moral or civil law, nor is the heroine sympathetically portrayed as an admirable street-walker, kept woman, unmarried mother or predatory wench.

Most remarkable thing of all—not one of the films persuades its audience that crime is romantic, seduction funny, chastity ridiculous, adultery justified by a great love, or that traditional moral convictions are false and out-moded.

All of this has been the work and the result of the Legion of Decency.

**"Sanctuary" filmed as "The Story of Temple Drake"**




# "That UNSCRUPU Rascal NORTH

The decision to develop[...] guese radio services at the[...] attention on the problem o[...] and bears witness to the[...] other countries. By highly[...] lingual broadcasts, by ex[...] vices and by the free loan[...] countries, Germany, Italy[...] hold on world opinion.

Britain has yet to take[...] against this world-wide[...] and prestige. Here is an[...] of the powerful use o[...] Government against Ger[...] War.

IT would be a great mistake to think that Britain is bad at propaganda. In the use of the old-fashioned media for showing the flag—visiting cruisers, ambassadorial panache, etc.—we were, before the War, first rate. During the War we were responsible for the greatest feat of propaganda in modern history. The value of our propaganda behind the German lines has been variously assessed, but no one doubts that it saved the Allies a year of war. German experts have claimed that it was actually the decisive factor.

A new study of this particular aspect of our War activities has recently been made by Dr. G. G. Bruntz in the United States. While many accounts have been given of what went on under Lord Northcliffe at Crewe House, Dr. Bruntz has had access to the archives of the Military Intelligence Division in Washington and there is a weight of documentation in his analysis which makes it unique. A short account of it has already been published by the School of Public Relations at Princeton University, in the Public Opinion Journal, one of the most interesting specialised papers in the world. The full book is due for publication by the Stanford Press.

Britain, of course, was not alone in setting up a propagandist headquarters. All the Allied Governments did so. There were the Alliance Francaise and the Maison de la Presse in France. In the United States the Military Intelligence section of the Army disseminated propaganda behind the lines, and the Committee of Public Information and the Friends of German Democracy complemented the effort in civilian quarters. At headquarters, the United States Army had a psychology section which saw to the examination of prisoners, and actually kept a graph of the ebb and flow of German morale. But the greatest single factor was the leadership of Lord Northcliffe at Crewe House. Writing of the 'despondency, discontent, depression, hanging heads' in 1918 a German paper said:

> To-day we can recognise the origin of this depression of German will power. It was the long-advertised publicity offensive of the Entente directed against us under England's lead and under the special direction of that unprincipled unscrupulous rascal Northcliffe.

General von Hutier, in an 18th Army Order in late 1918, paid a similar compliment:

> The enemy begins to realise that we cannot be crushed by blockade. He is therefore trying a last resort. While engaging to the utmost his military force, he is racking his imagination for ruses, trickery and other methods of which he is a past master, to induce in the minds of the German people a doubt in their invincibility. He has founded for this purpose a special Ministry, "The Ministry for the Destruction of German Confidence," at the head of which he has put the most thoroughgoing scoundrel of all the Entente—Northcliffe.

This will give a taste of the dramatic quality of the evidence which Dr. Bruntz has accumulated. He describes the Northcliffe tactic as designed to shatter the faith of the Germans in their military machine and to prepare the way for the overthrow of the Imperial Government. To this end, millions of leaflets were dropped behind the German lines. Every German expert of the time, civil and military, agreed that they had the desired effect on the tired-out troops, and despite every offer of reward for returned pamphlets and threat of punishment, and despite every counter-effort on the part of the domestic propaganda machine in Germany, their influence increased. The German military authorities made perhaps the fatal mistake of putting their counter propaganda in military hands, where, of course, no appreciation of the problem, or concentration for this very specialised task, could be expected. One German paper, later on, made the astonishing statement that the propaganda had become so effective, that by 1918 the Allied Govern-

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**A German War Propaganda Film.**

*By Courtesy of Associated Picture Corporation.*

ments had usurped the confidence of the German people, and that they actually 'place greater trust in Woodrow Wilson than in their own leaders.'

In the final issue of one of their propaganda publications the Germans said:

> In the sphere of leaflet propaganda the enemy has defeated us. We realised that in this struggle of life and death, it was necessary to use the enemy's own methods. But the spirit of the enemy leaflets will not permit itself to be killed. The enemy has defeated us, not as man against man in the field of battle, bayonet against bayonet. No! Bad contents in poor printing on poor paper have made our arm lame.

BUT Dr. Bruntz's analysis of the failure of the German counter-propaganda is more to the mark. The German Government, under the leadership of Ludendorff and Hindenburg made a desperate attempt to keep the propaganda at a distance by intensifying patriotic instruction among the German troops. The points to be emphasised were: the reason Germany entered, the results especially to the workers if they lost, the great strength of the German military machine, the victories of the "U" boats, the work of the great munition factories, the necessity of the co-operation of all classes, military, governmental, industrial and commercial, and the necessity for authority on the one side, obedience on the other. Special emphasis was to be laid on faithfulness to the Kaiser.

But this turned out to be arid stuff against the more human appeals of the Allies. The German caste system smothered it from the start. Moreover, says Dr. Bruntz, the military men were too busy with military details to bother about the *Vaterlandische Unterricht*. As one German paper put it:

> What good would it do to try to oppose the arguments of the enemy for a struggle for freedom and justice against the militarists of Europe.

The Germans, in fact, failed to realise the living nature of propaganda and the military leaders were not likely to be the most inspired teachers. The allied propagandists were more successful in Germany than the German propagandists themselves.

Dr. Bruntz's most unique contribution is the account, taken from the United States Military Archives, of the psychology of desertion.

Here is the important testimony of Hindenburg on the subtle influence exercised and there is a remarkable air of understanding about it.

> The enemy said in his innumerable leaflets that he did not mean to be hard with us, that we should only be patient and renounce all that we have conquered, then all would be well. We could then again live in peace. New men and a new government would provide for peace within Germany. Further struggle and efforts were useless. Such the soldiers read and discussed. The soldiers thought surely these could not all be lies, and permitted themselves to be poisoned and poisoned others.
>
> "I can only talk as a soldier at the front," said the artillery Lieutenant, L., "but even the little *flügblatter*, after you read them, you imagined you read the truth, that our Government was lying to us. I remember one, after I read it, I felt like blowing my brains out. I never let one of my men read them, but it was difficult—they were everywhere."

Dr. Bruntz's account is full of brilliant, dramatic material of this kind, and I, for one, now look forward with excitement to the publication of the complete work. It will not only be a gift to students of propaganda, but between its academic lines, it will also be, I am sure, one of the most poignant accounts of mass heartbreak every published.

# PROLETARIAN PANORAMA

***In the vivid, colourful life of the old 'Frisco days. Hollywood has found some of its best film material. Here is a glimpse of the rip-roaring maelstrom that was London in Victorian days—its public executions, its cut-throats and criminals, its slums, its violent social protests, its costers, its music-hall, and its theatre—waiting to put gusto into British films.***

SOME two-hundred-thousand of the most desperate and degraded characters of London, packed together beneath the walls of Newgate prison throughout the night, awaiting a public execution: a milling crowd, lit by flickering torches, rolling to and fro and roaring and singing, blaspheming and cursing, picking pockets and robbing as the opportunity arose.

Near four o'clock labourers working by lantern light put the finishing touches to the scaffold: soon an ancient and decrepit old man sidles out of the door of the prison and cautiously tests the drop; then, amid a roar of jeering and execration, slips back into the prison. At half-past seven St. Sepulchre's bell starts to toll and out of the prison emerges a little procession, the jailers, the minister of religion and other functionaries and the seven condemned "pirates" pinioned and "literally as white as marble."

Calcraft, the aged executioner, now proceeds to do his work with ghastly dexterity, amidst a terrible silence over the sea of upturned faces, pale, strained and eager, spectators on roof tops, railings and on tops of stationary vans. A crash that thunders across the streets; and Calcraft hanging on to each of the seven hanging men in turn to ensure that justice had been done; and a great and growing shout from the crowd "Calcraft, Calcraft, he's the man."

The last of such public executions was in 1868: the above description is summarised from Peter Quennell's *Victorian Panorama* (Batsford, 7*s.* 6*d.*) which, with text and pictures, comes to remind us again what material the Victorian age offers to British Cinema, comparable in many ways to the old Chicago and 'Frisco days which have served so well for American movies. Lighting up the low and high spots of Victorian life, giving a provoking glimpse of the rip-roaring maelstrom that was London in the last century.

What a London it was! The aristocracy, with their senile comforts and exclusive clubs, their gaming and their whoring; and the new rich with their more ostentatious pleasures; the middle-classes with growing power and narrowing consciences; the working people, divided into numerous strata, from the top-hatted mechanics and trades unionists to the dwellers in the slums, which in the very heart of the metropolis, offered a hideous contrast to the flaunted wealth of aristocracy.

One such slum is described in Mr. Quennell's book: access to it was through "a dark, narrow entrance, scarcely wider than a doorway, running beneath the first floor of one of the houses in the adjoining street. The court itself is fifty yards long and not more than three yards wide, surrounded by lofty wooden houses, with jutting abutments in many of the upper stories that almost exclude the light, and give them the appearance of being about to tumble down on the heads of the investigators." Hundreds were packed into small spaces like this; as in St. Giles Rookery where ninety-five small houses were split up between two-thousand-eight-hundred-and-fifty individuals. In most of these slums sanitation was so bad and refuse so heaped up on waste patches of ground, that outbreaks of cholera

and fever were frequent. It was this, and not Christian charity, that moved the wealthy to approve slum clearances—at least in the heart of the city—for epidemics spread from the hovels of the poor to the expensive homes of the rich.

In these slums were gathered some amazing people, engaged in some extraordinary occupations. Several hundred people depended for their livelihood on the rubbish and ordures of the city, ranging from the Toshers—described as "a comparatively prosperous, though regrettably intemperate body"—to the Mud-Larks and Pure-Finders, both of whom existed close to the starvation line. The Pure-Finders carried horse-dung from the streets to the tanyards of Bermondsey, where they sold it for 1*s.* to 1*s.* 2*d.* per stable bucket "according to its quality." Mud-Larks were mainly old women or young children who earned about threepence a day by scouring the Thames shore at low tide for chips of wood, old iron, bones and coals.

THE Toshers were sewer hunters. They made their way into the sewers, though this was forbidden by law, dressed in long, greasy, velveteen coats, furnished with pockets of vast capacity, and their legs encased in dirty canvas trousers, carrying a bag on their back and a pole, seven or eight feet long, with large iron hoe at one end.

This pole was used to try their ground where it seemed unsafe, and should the Tosher sink in the quagmire, to reach out and fasten to some jutting object with which the Tosher could pull himself out. The dangers of this occupation included the danger of loose brickwork injuring or hurting the Tosher, and attacks by ferocious rats. In return for braving these perils, the Toshers reaped a steady harvest of coins, copper, silver, and occasionally gold, of knives, forks and spoons and at lucky times, jewels. The main work however was the collection of metals, rope and bones. Once home the Toshers shared out the results of their work and adjourned to a pub to drink and eat away the spoils in carouses that ended only when all the money was gone.

In the Victorian scale of things the muckrakers were the lowest of the low classes—that was before much-raking became a profession, like the law or the church—and far above them in station and ways of living were the costers, who, of all the metropolitan working classes, have influenced most the language, the song and the tradition of the people. In Victorian days they were powerfully organised, with their own standards of conduct, modes of dress, traditions and prejudices; they enjoyed boxing, gambling, rat-hunting, pigeon shooting and music. They had a special hatred of the police: to "serve out" a copper was regarded among them as an act of considerable bravery and merit.

They were staunch radicals, had a contempt for the aristocracy and their amusements. Their feelings in this respect must have paved the way for many a Sunday newspaper owners' fortune. Their truculent independence and individualism, which grew out of their calling, their generosity, their songs and their patter; these have left a permanent mark on London life and culture.

Mr. Quennell barely touches on the other street life; the hawkers, the jugglers, acrobats, tumblers, sword-swallowers, the hansom cab drivers, whose modern counterparts carry the same virulent radicalism and independence, the musicians, from bag-pipe players to hurdy-gurdies with or without the performing monkeys. In this richness of life, this panorama of violent contrasts, rich in character and event, there is material for a hundred films. From this crude spawning of life over the metropolis, the social wrongs, the rigid class divisions, the poverty and reckless expenditure of wealth, the laxness and narrowness, there grew a character and vigour not nearly so widespread in present-day Londoners, too ironed out by schooling and too fastened down by suburban standards and conceptions to bear comparison with their grandfathers, In our politics, our drama, our amusements, even in our religion, our best seems to show a little dimly against the Victorians.

Ironical that our generation, so wise and so widely knowledged, which has thrown off the fetters clamped on the Victorian, should turn to Victorian days to find the giants with which to make biography, history, and drama. For all the facile theories, since exploded by the powerful logic of events, the rationalism and romanticism, the vulgarity and the refinement that was worse; the noble aspirations and the ignoble practice; for all Mr. Badman becoming John Bull and wearing bowler, black coat and trousers instead of leggings and check waistcoat; for all the blasphemy and sanctimony, there were giants in those days, that our troubled restless age looks back upon with puzzled awe.

The worst of Victorianism tottered on to the senile debauchery and tinsel that were Edwardian days; the best, the integrity, the boldness, the sense of man's power and rights, found its expression in the aggressive truculent, turbulent and restless movements of the pre-war days; the strikes that swept the industries with fever, the embittered, angry, ferocious employers and the rebellious workman, the clash of forces, halted by the war, which yet toppled over for all time the Liberalism that had lived for decades by its adroit balancing between the contending social elements.

IN the conditions of Victorian England popular art was bound to flourish. Here is one side of it—"the great Ross" singing the ballad of Sam Hall in a cellar in Maiden Lane. Dressed for the part in ragged clothes, with a battered hat on his head, a blackened clay pipe in his mouth, which with a scowl he would remove and begin "as if half in soliloquy, half in address to an imaginary audience, his slow chant of the condemned felon":

> And the parson he will come,
> He will come,
> And the parson he will come,
> He will come:
> And the parson he will come,
> And he'll look so blasted glum;
> And he'll talk of Kingdom Come:
> *Damn his Eyes.*

On the Victorian stage Mr. Quennell has much to say. The secret of modern decadence, he fancies, lies in the fact that acting has become a respectable profession, like pedalling stocks and shares or governing a colony, and the magnificent theatrical masks of

(*Continued on page* 21).

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## *by* Michael Powell

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*Samuel Phelps as Cardinal Wolsey.*

fifty years ago have been replaced by the more insipid countenances of numerous ladies and gentlemen who are equally at home on the golf course and on the boards. "A true actor is the slave and victim of his calling. Grease paint sinks deep into his skin. The habit of so counterfeiting emotion lends a sort of glorious insincerity and magniloquent humbug to everything he says and does; and though great actors are as rare as great painters or great musicians, it is one of the chief beauties of the theatrical career that every actor should, at one moment or another, give the impression that he feels he is *great*, or that greatness is still hovering within his grasp. Modesty, respectability, social conformity, are all equally out of place in the members of a cast who (here and elsewhere) have achieved their most conspicuous triumphs at a period when they were classified as rogues and vagabonds, and have lost in importance as they have gained in position and wealth."

Among the causes for the change, which was accelerated towards the end of the last century, Mr. Quennell places the disappearance of the old pit, which, towards the middle of the century began to be crowded away into the back of the house by the introduction of orchestra stalls. Smoky, violent in approval or disapproval, but the focus of intense enthusiasm, its electrified responses united actors and audience. None of the haughty indifference of the stalls of to-day, the late-comers, the audible whispering throughout the play. The theatre, says Mr. Quennell, was "still largely proletarian." At Sadlers Wells Phelps played for nearly twenty years to crowded, enthusiastic audiences. There were Macready and Kean, and last of the line, though with regrettable aspirations to respectability, Henry Irving. As the theatre steadily became more prosperous it became less vigorous. Vitality was lost as the social status of the audience improved.

The masses turned elsewhere. New and robust entertainments developed from the saloons, cider-cellars, and coal-holes of early Victorian London. During the earlier decades of the nineteenth century, cheap theatres known as "dukeys"—at which the audience secured admission for a penny ahead and the leading man received about twelve shillings a week for three performances an evening—offered cheap, clamorous and exciting fare. Melodramas, and fragments of historical and Shakespearian tragedy—Quennell mentions Macbeth in a red coat and waistcoat and Gloucester in a tweed suit—were played behind tallow footlights, the audience meanwhile enjoying pancakes and pickled whelks. In this period came the music-hall with its gusto and vitality and its roots in the people, its close relationship and intimacy with its audience, its greatest talents. Here we first meet the original "daring young man on the flying trapeze," whose gracefulness won the hearts of the ladies, and such figures as Dan Leno and Marie Lloyd, whose picture, says Mr. Quennell "splendid in ostrich feathers and short frilly skirts, helps us to understand both the temperament of the audience and the genius of the woman by whom they were delighted. We re-live her existence off the stage—the whelks, champagne, robust vulgarity and careless open-handed generosity—and we imagine the triumphant effect of her most rousing songs—that mixture of innuendo and unblushing innocence, as different from our modern conception of popular humour as the atmosphere of a modern cocktail-bar from the dusky-golden, gloomy yet glittering illumination that glorifies the sanctum of an old-fashioned pub."

It was the breach between the people and the theatre, the breach between drama and its roots in ordinary people, that reduced the theatre to its present level.

The best of Victorian entertainment, the vitality, the gusto, the crudeness and the rock-bottom realism went into pictures; began flickering across the halls and showplaces of all England, straight melodrama, right besting wrong, cowboys riding and shooting, bad men losing and good men winning, girls wronged and avenged; and the slapstick pantomime and genius that was Chaplin.

Will films go the way of the theatre?

I once heard Mr. Robert Flaherty say that in order to progress, the cinema needed a specialisation of audiences—theatres catering for different tastes and levels of culture. This has much to recommend it on the surface. but in actual fact would mark the beginning of the end of movies as a vital force. For would not this mean all the so-called art and culture in one cinema, and all the vitality, crudeness, and movement in the other? There are too many advisers, missionaries, and chappellers busy taking the life and guts out of the movies, without seeking to provide a public for the insipid mixture bound to come of such pretensions to high art.

*Victorian Panorama* is well worth a close reading: it is but a surface-skimming of Victorian days, but enough to provide valuable instruction to the purveyors of mass amusement and instruction to-day.

**Richard Carr**

*"The daring young man on the flying trapeze"*

*Marie Lloyd*

*The illustrations for this article are all taken from 'Victorian Panorama,' by Peter Quennell, by courtesy of the publishers, Messrs. Batsford, Ltd.*

# The Realist REVOLUTION that 'ZOLA' omitted

## by Alberto Cavalcanti

I HAVE been criticised for my article on Paul Muni's performance in *The Life of Emile Zola*. People don't seem to understand how I could both praise the actor enthusiastically and at the same time keep a fairly reserved attitude towards the film as a whole. This gives me a welcome, and rather unexpected, opportunity of discussing what I consider one of the most vital problems of the cinema. Amongst the film producers there is a general belief that real art is not a box-office asset or, at least, that the public would not admit quality of conception beyond a certain level. This belief has been, all along, a hindrance in the evolution of films.

After stating this, the producers are eager enough to call on the distributors for confirmation. The latter has the most determined opinion on the matter, for not only he, or his company, owns the cinemas, but (although we buy a ticket to get in) he seems to own the public as well: we are "his public." And because we are "his public," he professes to foresee every one of our reactions on a picture, a star, or even a "genre." It seems unbelievable, but it is true that the bulk of mass-observation, as it is called now, in the film shows is done entirely by this single man, owner or manager. He doesn't bother very much about it, either. And yet, he has no contempt for "his public." On the contrary he is naturally inclined to adorn us with all his tastes—and distastes.

Being only an individual, of a determined class, with, let us say, a limited culture, his judgment on our exceedingly complex body

*'The Life of Emile Zola'* (*Warner Brothers*)

—the public—is fallacious. For one thing, he doesn't go in and sit with us in the dark . . . If he did so, he would soon realise how easily the opinions, of which he feels he is so certain, cease to exist there. Mine do. So do those of my charwoman, who is sitting not far away. Because no possible difference of class or race could change the fact that the public, in a cinema, doesn't *reason*. It *feels*.

Chaplin was one of the first to acknowledge it.

But instead of following Chaplin's example, the producers seem to rely on their own judgment backed by those of the distributors.

Together, they have established a certain amount of box-office tenets; and these have become sacred. For them, to be a film-producer is, above all, to be a box-office expert.

Publicity was used, by both producers and distributors, to prove how right they were. It grew so quickly that it became not only an institution in itself, but a sort of symbol of their power.

Its main result was to upset for ever the little sense of criticism that the public ever had. With lots of publicity to back up its box-office qualities, a film is bound to make a great deal of money. Money is what producers are after. And money, again, is what distributors were invented for.

Flaherty is quite astonishing on the subject —his accounts of certain discussions on *Moana*, before its launching in U.S.A., as the *Love Life in the South Seas*, would make a most enlightening chapter, if he ever writes his memoirs. He confesses that he was so impressed by the arguments heard that he has felt ever since that the best film in the world could not survive unless some box-office angle was not found for its showing. Without it, the distributors would never believe in it.

In *Moana's* time people made films and then found the publicity for them. Now people seem to make films for no other reason than the publicity value.

And it is here that our case of *The Life of Emile Zola* can be brought back into the discussion. It is a film representing the last word in production skill of to-day. As well as the admirable performance of Paul Muni, photography, sound, direction, sets and costumes are first rate. And yet, beneath all this brilliance, the conception of the film itself seems to remain the same as that of a rather naïve and—may I say it?—a rather out-of date melodrama.

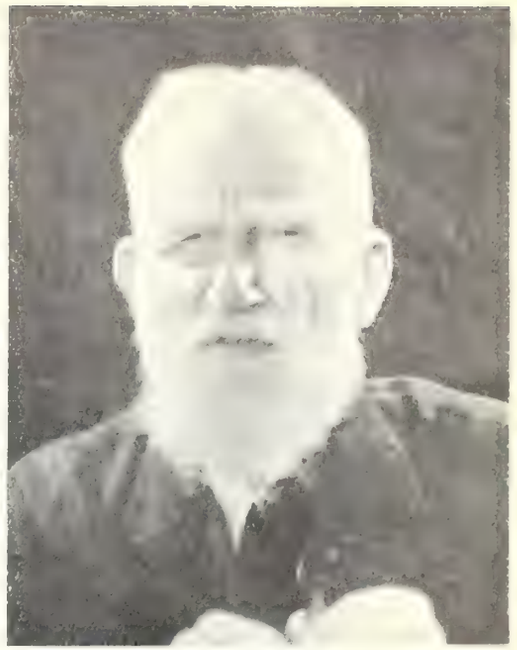
And *The Life of Emile Zola* is not the only one. The content of the films seem to remain invariably stationary while their technique progresses steadily.

Nobody will ever convince me that a much less conventional conception of the fight for realism by Zola and his friends, in the early part of the film, could have diminished its great box-office value. As it is, all the talent of Muni's performance seems considerably wasted in serving conventionality, when it could have been used, instead, to convey a much deeper and (pardon me) a much more dramatic notion, that of the realist revolution. I believe that this "feeling" of the audience would then have been used for the imbibing of a much higher, and socially useful, truth.

# GRIMALDI is DEAD

## Why not bury him?

## asks GEORGE BERNARD SHAW



THE Christmas Pantomime, being our most fantastic and fairylandish form of theatrical art, should never be allowed to get into a groove; yet there is no sort of public entertainment that has been more hopelessly stuck in a groove for a century past.

It is just a hundred years since the death of the great Joey Grimaldi, who created a sort of clown peculiar to himself, as Dundreary was peculiar to Sothern, Robert Macaire to Frederic Lemaitre, or as the screen tramp is to Charlie Chaplin.

Now nothing in the theatre is more tiresome and futile than attempts by later actors to reproduce these idiosyncratic masterpieces. Sham Chaplins are not in the least funny, no matter how industriously they work the bowler hat, the little cane, and the shuffling gait. Sham Dundrearys are only silly; and sham Grimaldis are the worst of all stage impostures because they have spoiled so many pantomimes.

I HAVE seen dozens of them; and not one has amused me since I was a very small child and thought it all real.

Once I saw a good pantaloon—one of the Hulines—but he discarded tradition and played gravely as an old marquis in a court dress of extreme elegance.

*Grimaldi* (*from "Popular Entertainments through the Ages"*)

I recall one brilliant harlequin, Teddy Royce, a first-rate burlesque actor and dancer. And I admit that a pantomime once kept me shrieking with laughter for half an hour and in thorough good humour for the rest of the evening. Its subject was "Sinbad the Sailor"; and what made me laugh so shamelessly was an outrageously vulgar exploitation of the humours of sea-sickness. The theatre was the Britannia in Hoxton; and the audience consisted mostly of 4,000 factory girls who threw boxes of sweets to their favourite performers and screamed frantically if they were picked up by the wrong person.

All the politer pantomimes have bored and disgusted me.

Sham Grimaldi was dying an intolerably slow death all the time.

"Peter Pan" was an attempt to get Christmas pieces out of their groove. "Androcles and the Lion" was another.

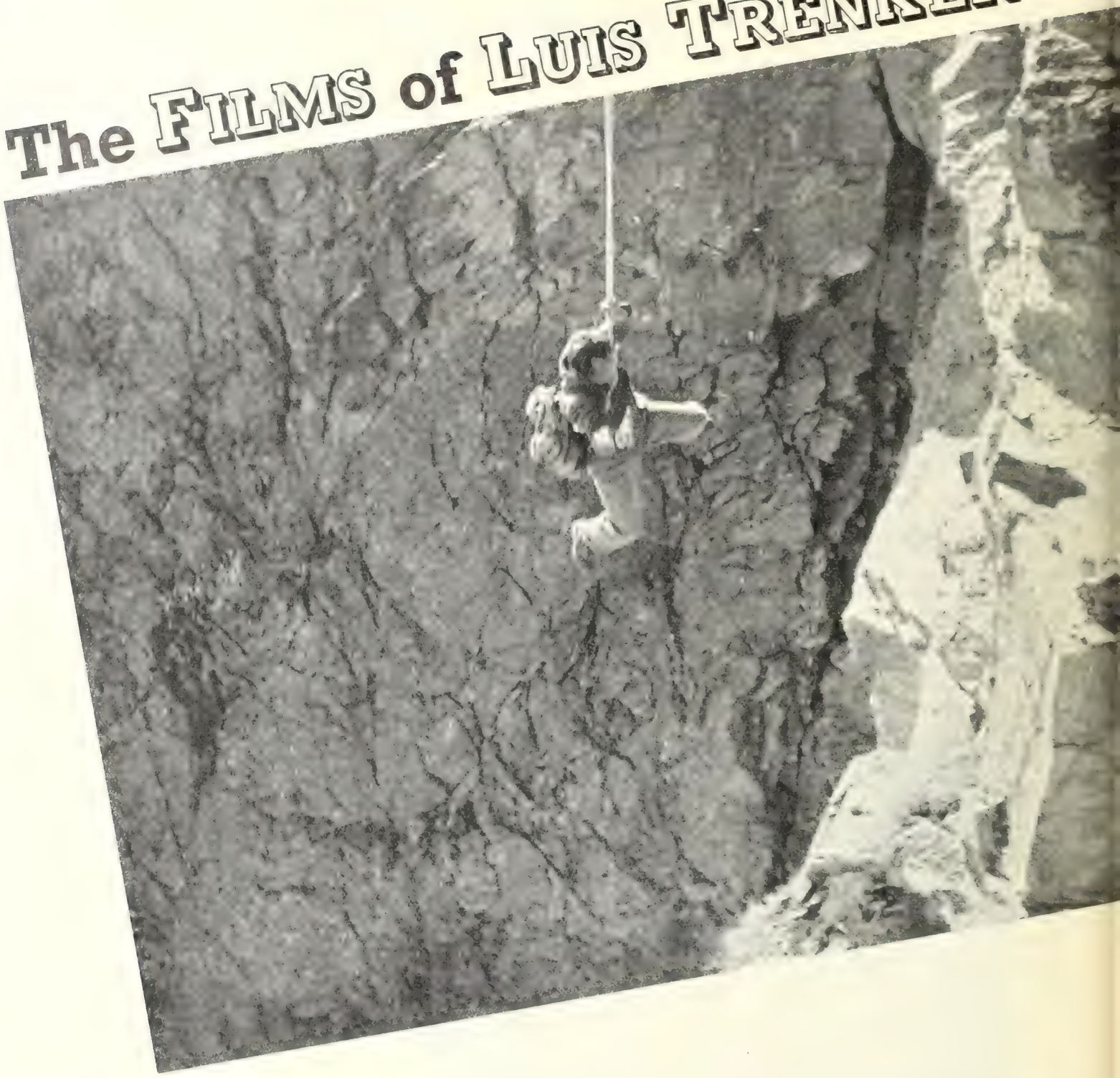
I have sometimes trifled with the notion that if only Grimaldi and Dan Leno and Herbert Campbell had never been born, we might be able to get back to the elegant fairy tales of the eighteenth century extravaganzas, with or without their transformation of the principals into a really dainty quartet of harlequin and columbine, rascally acrobat comedian and *père noble*. But we need to go forward, not backward.

As to the notion that the theatre has lost touch with the lives and problems of the man in the street, people would not write such nonsense if they could remember the theatre as it was when I was a beginner.

Do they really think that the plays of Mr. St. John Ervine, Mr. Priestley and Mr. Bridie are further from the lives and problems of our playgoers than the plays of Tom Taylor and the endless adaptations from the French which were the West End stock-in-trade fifty years ago? If so, they should have their pens taken away from them. Historical criticism is not their job.

(*Article by courtesy of 'The Era'*)

# The Films of Luis Trenker



THE film of the fresh-air seems to be rather in abeyance just now, with the studios of Germany vying with Hollywood in turning out ever grander and stuffier costume-dramas. It is pretty well left to the makers of the modern Western, who still seem to stumble on beauty as accidentally as the makers of the old Western; and, as far as art is concerned, solely to Luis Trenker.

But even if he had more company, Trenker would still be important. He would always stand apart from the other outdoor film men, because there is a purpose under his work.

If one had to "place" him in film history—never a grateful task, but we neat-minded critics like all our film figures to fit in somewhere—one would maintain that in spite of their widely different characters, he is the heir to Douglas Fairbanks. He typifies the poetry of human beings in motion. His films deal with the moving forces of Nature, wind, clouds, sun, avalanches; and with man as a similar force, as ski-er, climber, hunter. And, therefore, his films, like Fairbanks' early films, are essentially right as screen material. Like Fairbanks, and unlike most of the people now exposing celluloid, he is a legitimate figure of the film.

And here he is streets ahead of the other German film mountaineers. Fanck, for instance, quite apart from his contentment with idiotic plots, is rotted by a tendency to stand about and admire the scenery. Trenker moves in his scenery, and makes it move with him. In a film like *The Doomed Battalion*, the mountains act.

But Fairbanks was just magnificently coltish; he never expressed anything deeper than the joys of physical exercise. Trenker expresses a whole peasant morality and culture. His outlook and character have been moulded by one of the most original and

★ ★ ★

by

# Elizabeth Coxhead

★ ★

independent races in Europe. And its culture is a real culture; the traveller will tell you how the eldest son of his Tyrolese inn was a world-famous doctor or a Prix de Rome, while the second was the boots. Trenker was a qualified architect before he began to make films; he speaks several languages perfectly, has written many books, has travelled and seen; but he remains an authentic peasant and mountaineer.

His message is, as you might expect, only half-articulate. He cannot put it into easy symbols or words. But in all his films it emerges: the ideal of comradeship. *We, as Austrians, as mountaineers, as villagers, as inhabitants of a tiny valley, must hold together and help each other against the ravages of man and the devil.* . . . An essentially peasant idea, heroically narrow. We get it in the Kaiserjäger of *The Doomed Battalion*, in the students and Freischarler of *The Rebel*, in the woodcutters and guides of *The Lost Son*; he says himself:

"All that we do is a work of comradeship. As I love the free air and cannot endure the studio, so I love genuine and straightforward people, and hate the world of canvas and cardboard. In my work I have men about me who have now worked for me for many years. This idea of comradeship always springs up in my films."

And the War has given it a tragic intensity. Trenker is haunted by the War; and here again he typifies his race and generation. The mountains for him are full of ghosts. Here, he thinks, as he wanders among his own peaks, Hansl died, and here Fredl, and there young Otto was blown to pieces by a shell. . . . *The Doomed Battalion* is his own white-hot experience, and therefore his best and most coherent film. His own valley, the Grödnerthal, is lost to him. It is now the Val Gardena on the maps, but it is never so in his writings or in his heart. We to whom such things do not happen, can never understand the fervour or the bitterness of those to whom they do.

And because he tries to express the spirit of his people, Trenker wages a constant war against the temptation to insincerity. He goes in terror of being led into the artificial by his producers or his friends. For this reason he has struggled to make himself financially independent. He writes his own story, deliberately disregarding suggestions from outside; his enemies might hint that it is always the same story, and so it is, in the sense that it is always his own experience, but it is a story which in his own country, at any rate, can bear infinite repetitions. He does his own directing, associating himself with the best German technicians, and showing that technical conscientiousness which stamps all good German work. He acts his own chief part; but nothing annoys him more than the suggestion that he stars himself. He is a central but always an impersonal figure, a symbol, a type. When he loses the physical strength and grace for these parts, he will easily find some young Tyroler to do them equally well. But this intensely personal method of work—and no director, at the present moment, is so all-pervading in his films—is a natural development from his conception of the film as an art.

And when all is said, it is difficult to assess his work, even for someone to whom it has always given intense pleasure. It is like judging a whole nation, and nations are too big to be judged. Plainly, he is a terrific success in his own country, a popular hero; he stands for all that his people hold precious. Equally plainly, he will never be a great international figure, as Fairbanks was, because he is too deeply rooted in the traditions of a little race. In Hollywood, he is incongruous to the point of absurdity; not that his Hollywood visits have ever been more than mere interludes, to make the English dialogue for a film.

Equally he is incongruous at Denham, where he has been making interiors for *The Challenge*, a film dealing with Whymper's first ascent of the Matterhorn. The studio officials, friendly but puzzled, suggest that you can't expect a man to be quite normal who spends so much time on the tops of mountains. . . . Here, once again, another director is set over him, and dialogue is written in a language foreign to him; and one has misgivings that the film can't be truly his, as *The Doomed Battalion* was. But at any rate the Matterhorn will give satisfaction, and so will Trenker, lithe and enthusiastic as ever, and brown enough to shame their studio make-up. Five minutes spent talking to him and one is spiritually transported to the authentic Alpine hut.

Fairbanks was international partly because he was superficial; Trenker's roots go too deep for transplanting. He will never be more than a half-success, but he has qualities that no one else has, and that we all respond to. He brings to machine-suffocated audiences a breath of fresh air. He is the creature we had very nearly forgotten: man as a part of nature, man as an elemental force.

# WHAT DO THEY SEEK?

WHAT about you, Mr. Lay? You're a farmer. What do you country people want from the cinema?

We don't often get the films we like. There is too much tragedy and we see enough of that in the village anyhow. Speaking as a countryman, village bred and born, I suggest that to appeal to us the plot must not be too complicated, or too quick in its movement. We like a little sentiment; the love element without the sex complex. We enjoy old-fashioned love tales; films that deal with every-day life of our English, Scotch, Welsh and Irish peoples, and with the "virtue rewarded" type of ending.

That doesn't sound as though the slick, sophisticated type of films would appeal to you?

No, I was born and have lived most of my life in a typical Bedfordshire village. I've seen many changes, gradual, but nevertheless real, in the customs, the habits and the outlook of village people. The cinema has come, like the motor-cars, the radio sets and many other wonderful innovations, and we are still rubbing our eyes with amazement. . . .

I asked our local blacksmith yesterday what appeal the cinema had for him. He answered ironically, with a sniff and a snigger—"I see enough living pictures every day from my shop door to satisfy me, and, anyhow, I see what is real and true, and to watch a film bores me, strikes me as unreal, artificial and just make-believe." Of course, country people do seek for some form of recreation and amusement at times. The theatre and music hall are, as a rule, beyond our purse, and so the cinema has been and is, a source of knowledge and amusement, but our attendance is occasional and not regular.

Do you think it has any lasting effect on your lives when you do go?

Yes, I imagine that seeing a film has a more lasting impression on a country person than it does on a town person. A few of our village lads and lasses do now and again contract a disease of the mind at the cinema—a disease that obscures or corrupts their natural, healthy outlook. There are some who spend too many hours each week at the cinema—(and some, by the way, will go into debt to do this). I have seen village lasses apeing to be film stars instead of learning better to become, what God probably meant them to be, the happy wife of a contented British workman. I do want to see films portray life from the best standards, not the worst. I want more educational films. Films should be made to show our traditional and historical episodes from the earliest times down to the present day, and also showing to-day the material progress of the countryside. How old-fashioned ideas and ways of dealing with the land are being superseded by up-to-date methods. I think this would be infinitely more interesting and amusing than some of the foreign trashy films whose attractions are so often just an exotic complex or mere gangsterisms.

All that sounds rather serious to me. I suppose you do like a comic now and again?

Yes, we all love the circus clown and the music-hall wise-cracker.

Wise-cracker! The films have made a difference to the countryman's speech then, even if they haven't made any difference to his behaviour!

Well, of course, we all learn a code of behaviour more or less from the films we see. But if they are of a high order the influence on behaviour will be good. It's a producer's privilege and duty to aim high, and not to pander to low tastes.

NOW what about you, Mr. Hargreaves? You live in a very different street. As a man who spends most of his time roundabout the West End—why do *you* go to the cinema?

It would be silly for me to say that I go to the cinema purely for entertainment. That isn't true because I've seen documentaries that I've enjoyed as much as the Silly Symphonies. I don't even mind being preached at in the cinema with a film like *Green Pastures*. But I do want a film to do its primary job, and that is to move. I hate films that just copy a successful play and keep to one scene all the time. I enjoy descriptive writings as much as anybody, but I believe that one picture is worth a column of story, and a good film can pack in so much more than a play. They used to say of Edmund Kean that to see him act was like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning. I want the film to illuminate a scene, to range back through the centuries and show me people as they were, and as they lived; and to range over the world of to-day and to-morrow.

You always go to a West End cinema. That seems funny to me, when you can see the same film later on at a suburban cinema at half the price. Why not wait till they come round to these local cinemas—and see them cheaper?

Because, a new film, like a new play or a new opera for that matter, is news when it gets its first showing in the West End. I read a lot about films, I see most of the notes and the bulletins that are issued by the various film companies. I don't take them all literally, of course, but they do give you a hint, or a suggestion, of a new team, or an unusual theme, or the handling of a well-known star by a new director. Then sometimes one reads a usually hard-boiled critic who raves about a new film when it hits New York, and then you look out for it when it gets to the West End as you would for a new opera star. And there is, of course, this very decided advantage in seeing a film in the West End—you do see the uncut copy; some of the longer films are often cut down when they go on general release.

NOW, David, what does the modern schoolboy think about it all? When I was your age, I used to be able to get in for a penny on Saturday afternoons. My wife tells me she once got in for a ha-penny. And they gave her a bag of sweets as well. They were silent films then. All the sound we got came from a young lady at the piano—and *us*, of course. We used to shout a warning to the hero when the villain was creeping up behind him. But he never took any notice. There was a lot more movement in the old silent films. Especially the cowboy ones.

Yes, I like cowboy films.

I haven't seen any lately, but I'm told—now they've gone talkie—they put a lot more love in 'em. I've got a friend who's eleven and he says all this love-stuff spoils a cowboy film.

Yes, I agree with him. I don't like seeing a film with a soppy love story. There's too much of it.

He tells me he often prefers the films he sees at school. Educational films.

I like them in school when we have them, but I don't like them in a cinema; they bore me.

Why?

I don't know. When we're taken to the cinema from school and an educational film

In response to many requests, we print, by permission of the B.B.C., extensive extracts from the recently broadcast discussion on the audience and the cinema. The talk was led by Mr. Herbert Hodge, a taxi-driver, who makes the interpolations and the closing remarks. Others in order of speaking: Mr. H. C. Lay, a farmer; Mr. F. Buckley Hargreaves, a journalist; Master David Boswell, a schoolboy; Mr. S. C. Barrell, a film society member, and Mrs. Edna Thorpe, a housewife from a housing estate.

comes on, it just doesn't fit in. We might just as well be back at school. But I like travel films. We saw some of that on Wednesday in colour—fisher-folk in Cornwall transporting lime to London in old schooners, all done in colour.

What about thrillers?

I like any thriller. Last Wednesday, we saw *The Return of the Scarlet Pimpernel* and about a month ago I saw *The General Died at Dawn*. I liked those two very much. I like historical films if they're exciting. I like gangster films, but I think I prefer *The Return of the Scarlet Pimpernel*.

Talking of educational films, what about films about machines—do you dislike those?

No, I like mechanical films about inventions, and the ones about factories—you know *The Life History of a Pin*. I like those in the cinema.

Don't they take you back to school?

No. The sort of things we see at school are how a chick develops inside an egg, and all about plants.

Do you like cartoons?

I love Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck; I like all cartoons that make me laugh.

Do you prefer the coloured ones?

No, I like the black-and-white ones best; they're much funnier, I think.

What do you think about the effect of the cinema on boys? On their behaviour.

Well, I think it creates a terrific imagination. I mean the film which is very often thoroughly imaginative. I don't think otherwise it should have any effect. It's quite nice to go round in gangs with a toy pistol. I like it myself—or I used to. But I can't say I feel desperate after a desperate film. I mean, in a gangster film there's usually a hero that knocks down the gangsters, and most boys like to copy him and so there's not much harm in them.

What about these special performances for children that some cinemas put on; on Saturdays as a rule—what do you think of them?

I went once, just to see what it was like, but I didn't enjoy it much. They didn't have a very good programme; one was a cowboy, but there was rather a soppy love thing in it. I prefer to go to the ordinary performance.

NOW, Barrell! I suppose, as a member of a film society, you see the cinema more as an art than a mere entertainment?

I think we all go to the cinema for the same thing; primarily for the same thing anyway; to get amusement or entertainment.

A film society programme will usually consist of a carefully selected feature film and supporting non-fictional films, with an occasional cartoon. Sometimes as much as fifty per cent of the programme will be documentary in nature. The feature film will usually be of the type shown by the repertory cinemas. Repertory cinemas draw on the existing stock of films, but they are always shown some time after they've had their general release. The films chosen are of a very high standard. The standard of public taste, to my mind, is higher at *all* cinemas than the pictures we get, and the cinema people think we want.

Why is it twenty million people go every week?

So many people go to pass the time. Ordinary people who go twice a week to their local cinema, whatever they are showing, use no discrimination at all. . . .

WE haven't heard the woman's point of view yet. Is it so very different from the man's, Mrs. Thorpe?

Speaking as a housewife, I find a seat at the cinema one of the easiest and cheapest ways of getting a change from the daily round. It brings interest, amusement, education, almost to our door at prices to suit nearly everybody.

That sounds as though you're perfectly satisfied.

I wish I could always feel like that, but there are still times when we're offered the not-so-good picture. I know we're getting more first-class films. We have more real, sincere films based on themes which once no producer would have tackled, and thank goodness, most of us appreciate these good things. At other times, as I say, we have only average programmes to choose from. Mind you, when the main attraction is less than an epic, the supporting programme often includes something interesting in the way of a travel or documentary film.

You do like travel and documentary films then? Most men I've talked to seem to think a tired housewife wants sheer relaxation.

Not many of us go to the pictures with a conscious desire to be instructed. We probably enjoy the painless education when we get there, but our first wish is to be amused or interested by some aspect of life which seems different from our own. Perhaps we've been spoiled. When you compare early films with modern productions, it's amazing. Cinema managers might well say we want too much, considering that they offer three hours' entertainment at a time.

I was asking Lay about the influence of the film on people's behaviour. What do you think about it?

Some people say the cinema gives impressionable young people false ideas about life, and too many heroes to worship. It's not for me to argue about that, but I remember having moods and day-dreams when I was young, though I didn't visit the cinema. Reading got the blame for mine.

YES! Sexton Blake used to get the blame for mine! But seriously though, I can't help wondering whether there isn't something in it. The argument, I mean, that shoddy films encourage shoddy behaviour. I'm not thinking of gangster films. They're rather like the old penny bloods. The characters may be *bad* men. But they are *men*, and, as David said, a boy tends to copy the hero rather than the villain.

It's the films that haven't any men and women in them I'm thinking of. The kind of film that makes heroes and heroines out of the most useless members of society. The so-called bright young things. The smart set; and where people who *do* work for their living are shown as either feeble-minded or not quite nice.

That kind of film, it seems to me, can have a bad effect on people's behaviour. Especially on young people whose only window on the world is the cinema. Mind you, I think the films are getting better in this respect. The Americans have been giving us a few clerks and mechanics and peasants for heroes lately. And a few heroines who are living women instead of pegs to hang pretty clothes on. But the film directors still seem to be a bit nervous about it. I was reading about a Hollywood director the other day, who said he was afraid he'd rather spoiled his last film by being too honest about life. "The public," he said, "isn't ready for an excess of honesty just yet." I don't know about an *excess* of honesty. But I think we could safely stand a slightly increased dose of it. A few more films like *The Good Earth* and *Make Way for Tomorrow* and Chaplin's *Modern Times*. I'd like to see their *British* counterparts, too. We've had some good films about upper-class British life. But I'd like to see more about my own sort, the three-or-four pounds a week people. . . .

SEARLE'S film *War without End* is very well photographed, directed on clean, straightforward lines and neatly assembled. In addition, it presents that most dramatic of subjects—the inside of a hospital. Hence, the material carries the director, rather than the director creating the material, but it carries him quite a long way because he has treated it intelligently. I always remember the old Hippodrome revues, in which gigantic stage spectacles, revolving settings, magical lighting, and a huge chorus forming rhythmic patterns, created an impressive background for a leading lady to step out and sing a refrain in an almost inaudible voice. Then the spectacle continued, the chorus slaved, the lights did their stuff, and finally the curtain descended, and, believe it or not, the leading lady came before them and bowed to terrific applause—taking all the credit for that astounding piece of stagecraft. That is an interesting simile which all documentalists should remember, for whether they are dealing with operations, railway trains or power stations, they are relying, perhaps unconsciously, on the natural action of the material being shot, thereby allowing their creative ability to lie dormant.

*War without End* begins with an impressive procession of nurses and students, and then presents one of those fragmentary prologues of little bits and pieces, unrelated, to allow the commentator to introduce the subject. Following that is a rather too hurried survey of medical history, pioneers' photographs being superimposed over the turning pages of an old volume. The most interesting information given regarding the achievements of such men as Pasteur is too brief, and the commentary scampers after the images in vain. Thereafter, however, a leisurely tempo is established, and the picture is noteworthy for its revealing close-ups, its dignified commentary, and its excellent music. An operation is seen, or rather not seen, for the censor turned surgeon and made some big cuts. But to bridge the gap so created, Searle superimposed a clock over the patient's face, and the sequence is presented in complete silence, which is most effective. I understand that the Censor eliminated the operation because it was, from his point of view, 'sacred'.

It seems a pity to me that all the things which people need most are invariably too sacred to present to them. Christ is usually kept off the screen because He is sacred—instead of being presented on every possible occasion simply because He is sacred. All constructive attempts to create Peace which must necessarily be opposed to the diabolical methods of the Constitution are barred, presumably because they too are—sacred?—No, they come under the heading of sacrilege, which amounts to the same thing if prohibited from the public screen.

Now an operation is sacred. Admittedly, it is neither pleasant, nor entertaining, but, in some circumstances it is necessary, just as the Censor is, to prohibit dirt and encourage intelligence, but judging by the extremely questionable and suggestive material which finds its way into the cinema, and the absence of subjects which seek to create a finer civilization—his tactics are hard to understand.

By the simple method of fading in and out, various dissimilar subjects are presented—the wonders of X-Ray, and the record of a beating heart—fractures—teeth—eyes. Then a dramatic sequence dealing with diabetic kiddies, and their dependence on insulin, and special foods. Cancer, too, is dealt with boldly

# WAR WITHOUT END

**An impressive procession of doctors and nurses, the wonders of X-ray, writhing cancer germs, the brave work of doctors who try out new apparatus on themselves; these and other sequences from Francis Searle's new film are discussed by Andrew Buchanan.**

and the most powerful X-Ray high tension apparatus yet made is shown—the patient being in touch with the controller by microphone. A close-up of cancer germs writhing about is an important insert, but there is not sufficient emphasis given to the wise words that prevention is better than cure. Here are cures in plenty, but what I always think when confronted with wonders of medical science is—why not try to make them as unnecessary as possible by enlightening the masses on how to live wisely instead of permitting millions to eat and drink what they like without knowledge?

Massage follows, and exercises by a team of girls—nervous diseases, and the brave work of doctors who try out new apparatus on themselves, and lastly an aerial ambulance is clearly dealt with. To terminate the film, we see a meeting of the Directors of King Edward's Hospital Fund in Old Jewry, with H.R.H. the Duke of Kent in the chair. This is a silent sequence, though those present are talking, and the effect is not improved by the inclusion of a still photograph of the King. I can never understand why it is not made easier for film-makers to secure first class films of the Royal Family, instead of permitting only stills or hurriedly snatched shots in all weathers for newsreels. Surely it is due to posterity that all eminent personalities should be recorded in picture and sound by the finest technicians obtainable.

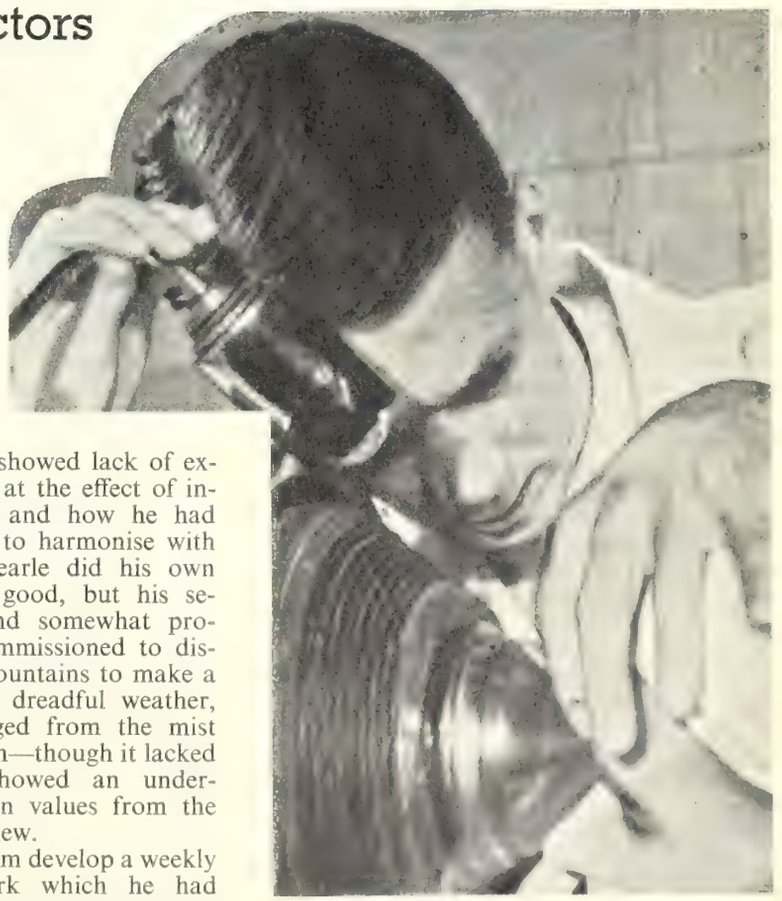
The film ends by reverting to the turning pages of the old volume, and the original procession of nurses and students—a suitable finale. The length is about 2,500 feet, so that it was an achievement to condense such a lot of detail of so exacting a nature into a compact space like that. It must have been difficult work shooting in wards and small rooms—and yet I feel there are numerous opportunities for ingenious treatment which Searle has not grasped. This fact, plus the absence of continuity—that is, the constant fading from one subject to another, categorises the film as a nice, neat technical job, marking a definite step forward for Searle, but when he steps, it must not be into the darkness. That is why, in encouraging him, I have emphasised the difference between creating a film, and making the best of one which is based on material that is, in itself, vital.

A few years ago I viewed some shorts Searle had made, which illustrated certain songs played on an organ. He had produced them privately, without any resources, and although the assembling showed lack of experience, I was surprised at the effect of ingenious synchronisation, and how he had captured suitable images to harmonise with the music and lyrics. Searle did his own camerawork which was good, but his sequences were uneven and somewhat prolonged. Then he was commissioned to disappear into the Welsh mountains to make a sheep-farming picture in dreadful weather, and he ultimately emerged from the mist with quite a creditable film—though it lacked essential polish, and showed an underdeveloped sense of screen values from the entertainment point of view.

I was then able to aid him develop a weekly documentary series—work which he had hankered after for some time, knowing that the ceaseless production of a variety of subjects forms the finest training ground possible.

To produce in two days, say, a pictorial analysis of wireless telephony; the evolution of a tiddler; a mannequin parade, and a packet of swing music, is not easy if one is a methodical craftsman—and Searle managed to carry out the huge task well, for remember a specialist desires more than anything to specialise. But by specialising I do not wish to see Searle develop one of those one-way minds, with a complete absence of humour, which characterises so many documentalists. Searle has not yet had an opportunity of handling fictional situations, and so he has not experienced the difficulties of creating dramatic and comedy sequences out of real life. Instead, he has been given the opportunity of making a film about hospitals which he has done well—but, for several reasons—the picture offers no criterion of what he can or cannot do in the future, though it reveals him to be a most careful and painstaking technician. Why is it no criterion? Why do so many documentalists make successful films without creating anything? Merely because the material is ready-made, and, in itself, impressive. Even if filmed and assembled poorly, some subjects can hold an audience, simply because the material is of vital interest.

There are so very few men with determination and ability to overcome the difficulties which the film industry has created within itself that I, for one, welcome all signs of progress made by newcomers, but let them learn to regard the screen, not merely as a mirror to reflect life as it really is, but as a blank canvas upon which they may paint their individual interpretations of actuality.



*Pictures from "War Without End."*

This month has been all fairy tale. *Wells Fargo*, *Stage Door*, *The Perfect Specimen:* each in its kind is an exercise in the faraway. Take *Wells Fargo* for example. There was a day when we got some zingo with our epics of the West. When the covered wagons had finished their bloody deviations with the Indians, the first snowflakes fell on the receding caravan to herald yet another chapter in the adventure. The first sod was cut in the virgin soil to turn a fantasy into a fact. Epic meant something. It meant to tap root into time and the realities and importance took the cardboard figures of fiction and made them figures in history.

*Wells Fargo* has no excuse for not getting something of this larger bearing into its story of the birth of American Transport. Hollywood has done this sort of thing so often and so brilliantly during the past fifteen years that it should be relatively easy now to catch the magic of space, infuse the zest of the frontier and pile up the weight of primitive events. Here the story gets indoor among the women and is done for. There is a dreadful lot of bothering about the best girl back home, and the sweat that breaks out on the film's sentimental forehead over the birth of a child is like a panic in suburbia. No breeding of frontiersmen here and no frontiersmen either.

"Why didn't you come in time?" says the wife to a husband who is only supposed to have been three or four thousand miles across the Rockies and back; and she turns her pettish little face to the wall. And the hard-boiled hero of these decadent days gets down on his knees and sobs for ten minutes of shameless apology. You might be anywhere between Stepps Road and Hither Green. If you tell me that Stepps Road and Hither Green are the pillars, and apology the *élan vital* of civilization, I shall believe you, but poor *Wells Fargo*. With all this skulking on the job laid end to end, it is only your woman's idea of epic. A perfect bevy of births and the birth of American Transport nowhere.

How pleasant to have alongside *Wells Fargo* at the Carlton the more virile antics of Popeye and the Forty Thieves. Can you imagine our noble Popeye slobbering on his knees while Olive Oil, the unloved one, produces a Gargantuan Junior. I doubt if he would know and I should rejoice to hear his comment if he did. In the *Forty Thieves*, a superior epic on all counts, he certainly has the lady doing her appropriate piece of desert trudging and no mercy shown. I have not seen many Popeyes recently and the development of the sotto voce in this one came as something of a surprise. It helps Popeye considerably for now he can, very properly, keep his Olympian mutterings to himself. It seems, moreover, to give something of a new dimension to cartoon comedy. Time and again the joke is made with the mumble or the mutter. It will be only just if this second voice which Eugene O'Neil invented for tragedy, Hitchcock chained to melodrama, turns out to be at its brightest and best in slapstick.

I CANNOT imagine anyone specially anxious to hear about *The Perfect Specimen* but it is so interesting a social case that one had better take academic notice of it. It is right out of the early days of Richard Dix and Lois Wilson—those happy days before the slump when there were no economics to spoil the perfect romance. The young millionaire may be something of a prig but get him out into the world, blood him in brotherhood with the commonalty, find him the right girl, and be sure he has a heart of gold. I shall not try to explain why Hollywood should believe that rich young men have hearts of gold but it ardently does. Mr. Deeds was another variant of the myth, and a cunning one. He was really, you remember, a poor man and only happened to be rich by accident and you couldn't blame him for it. In the slump you had to be careful. Audiences were looking carefully at their rich young men and hearts of gold were under suspicion, and Mr. Deeds had to be dressed up with an economic theory before he was permitted to pass. But these unfortunate shadows have gone. *The Perfect Specimen* is not called upon like Mr. Deeds to placate the hungry mob. Time rolls back to 1924 and with a couple of odd gestures to hard work, our millionaire graduates with honours. I hope you will appreciate as I did the confidence of the atmosphere. Slip back 15 years and you are young again. Better still, slip back 40 or 50 years, and you are not even born. Already one sees the bicycle made for two edging over the horizon. And so what? we asked a couple of years ago. And so Victoria! they answer.

There are three brilliant passages in *The Perfect Specimen* and they all quite rightly record the activities of madmen. There is the study of a Garage Proprietor who like a brahmin has passed beyond the material world, invents crazy contraptions for doing nothing in particular, and ignores money. There is the Professor so absent-minded that plants and people have become species of a single genus in his muddled memory. There is Hugh Herbert as his own brilliant inconsequential self, slapping his face out of the moon at you. And why not? In a lunatic asylum all cows are black. Errol Flynn who plays the Specimen is a good man gone wrong. He once wrote the story of his sea-going adventures on the Australian coast and very genuine stuff it was.

*Stage Door* is already booked by a half a dozen critics as a masterpiece and it is certainly a remarkably directed description of a theatrical boarding house. Keeping a dozen young women flowing in a single stream for the best part of a film, and maintaining the while their separate little characters and stories, is a very difficult feat in cinema. It means a huge ingenuity in the shaping of exits and entrances and the still more considerable business of holding the central necessarily fast narrative through the detail. Few films manage it. *Dead End*, for example, got the character detail, but lost its narrative speed. Most films shy away from the detail. There is, moreover, in *Stage Door* an interesting use of sound and particularly at the point in the story where the young girl who has lost her part in a play commits suicide. Add to this the excellent acting of Katharine Hepburn, Ginger Rogers, and quite a number of the smaller boarding house parts and the score might seem to be good for the masterpiece claimed.

Why is it not? The fact is there is something theatrical and light weight about the whole business. Here we have the story of youth, ambition, and disillusion in the great city. Evidently someone took it seriously for there is the sound band of suicide and there are the antics of tragedy. I don't know, but I wouldn't say there was real pity or that the tear was genuine.

# WHAT, NO

**WELLS FARGO, a Paramount film, directed by Frank Lloyd, with Joel McCrea, Bob Burns, Frances Dee and Lloyd Nolan.**

**THE PERFECT SPECIMEN, a Warner Brothers' film, directed by Michael Curtiz, with Errol Flynn, Joan Blondell, Hugh Herbert, Edward Everett Horton and May Robson.**

**STAGE DOOR, an RKO-Radio film, directed by Gregory La Cava, with Katharine Hepburn, Ginger Rogers, Adolphe Menjou, Gail Patrick and Andrea Leeds.**

*Reviewed by John Grierson*

# SPINACH ?

**SOUTH RIDING, a London Films' picture, directed by Victor Saville, with Edna Best, Ralph Richardson, Edmund Gwenn, John Clements, Ann Todd and Marie Lohr.**

**IT'S LOVE I'M AFTER, a Warner Brothers' film, directed by Archie L. Mayo, with Leslie Howard, Bette Davis, Olivia de Havilland and Eric Blore.**

**LA GRANDE ILLUSION, a French film, directed by Jean Renoir, with Erich von Stroheim, Jean Gabin and Dita Parlo.**

*Reviewed by Basil Wright*

*South Riding* is an amazing mix-up. Some of it is so good, so vivid, so analytical even, that one can hardly believe that other sequences, reminding us so redundantly how bad British films were in 1925, are by the same hand. Dickens of course used to produce the same sort of muddle, but he at least did it on a vast scale of unashamed and unshameable vulgarity, infinitely preferable to the refined nonsense of this film's finale, with girl guides and nurses and scouts and fire-brigades and aldermen and Ralph Richardson and Edna Best and the County all singing "Land of Hope and Glory" in a fantastic synthesis of René Clair and a newsreelman's nightmare. They can fly all the little Union Jacks they like in the wide open spaces of Denham, in fact, I will lend them mine as well, provided they will realise that you can't mix slop and slapstick with a number of sequences which do at least infuse a sense of reality into the problems and politics of a small Yorkshire town, and are in general more worthy of the team which produced *Storm in a Teacup*.

My reading being strictly confined to Runyon and Wodehouse, I cannot estimate how much of the Holtby book has got across into the screen version; but when the film is being serious and sensible it has all the air of being a good adaptation and a first class job of scripting. Ian Dalrymple can be relied on for that sort of thing—but, once again, why the mix-up? It happens not merely from sequence to sequence, but actually inside a single shot—witness the interview between the schoolgirl and the headmistress, which begins in the purest vein of naturalism and suddenly degenerates into a banal unreality scented with a whiff of Angela Brazil.

Maybe we should smother our protests in gratitude for a film which builds its personal stories round the problem of a housing estate; that at least is refreshing. The small-town councillors are often well-portrayed—notably by John Clements as the milk-minded Socialist (with hacking cough)—but then again they tend to degenerate into the hypocritical serio-comic villain of Edmund Gwenn (you need not be told his name is 'Oogins). There is a counter-plot—the story of the decline of ye olde country mansion, with true-blue Squire Richardson supporting (on a mortgage) a lunatic wife in a Home of Rest. And the schoolmistress (Edna Best) acts as a go-between on the two plots, scrapes through the bad stuff more easily than any other of the cast, and gets her man in the end.

What is it all about really? Did anyone on the production ever make up their mind? If it was to be farce, they had no business to be serious about slums; if serious, they should have taken their comedy from the actual smalltown elements, and eschewed the artificial slap-and-tickle which never breathed the air of a genuine market place. As it is—well, if you put all your eggs into two baskets you'll have to send the lot to the curate; that's all they're good for. On the whole, the film had better be seen, for the sake of its good moments, which remind us of the wealth of indigenous excellence awaiting the purse-proud and cosmopolitan masters of the film world, if and when they ever awake from their dream of fair women.

WHY did we allow Eric Blore to go to the States? His performance in *It's Love I'm After* is one of the most beautifully conceived pieces of comedy acting possible. As a gentlemen's gentleman (with a strong desire to be a cad's cad) he has one sublime scene in which his talent for bird imitation (his Golden Oriole still rings in my delighted ears) is used to warn his master against love-making in the solitude of a garden; unfortunately the scene of operation is next to a large aviary, and in the ensuing moments Blore fights a losing battle as a lone interrupter of this vast Parliament of Fowls. Bless him: he is the lifeblood of this film, which also happens to star Leslie Howard (quite rightly sticking to comedy nowadays) and Bette Davis, who can act. The best idea of the film is the opening scene, in which Howard and Davis conduct a vicious but sotto voce quarrel during the death scene from "Romeo and Juliet." Of its kind *It's Love I'm After* is good—but the monotony makes it difficult to decide whether it really is duller than, say, *Love is News* or whether the time is merely out of joint.

IF *La Grande Illusion* is not great, it is not because it was made by a bad director. It is in every sense remarkable, and should on no account be missed by anyone interested in cinema or in the psychology of war. But—and it is a difficult "but"—there is a fundamental error. The story is good—a story of prison camps in Germany, of efforts to escape, of suspense, failure, suspense, success—all the elements in fact of good cinema. The theme is even more striking—the effect of war conditions on class distinctions. We see how, in the prison camps, the aristocrats, the bourgeoisie, and the workers group themselves, not according to nationality, but according to their class. We see the aristocrats—German von Rauffenstein, Gallic de Boeldieu; the bourgeois—Lieutenent Marechal, ex-mechanic, and Rosenthal, wealthy Jew; we see the nameless and innumerable ciphers of the "lower classes"—navvy or docker or peasant, all drifting into their own closed circle, and only prevented from making a complete class cosmos by the extra class distinction superimposed by war—the distinction between officers and men. United by the desire to escape, officers wield the secret shovel regardless of rank in civilian life—but there is a fundamental gulf between de Boeldieu and his fellow officers.

War—the great leveller. Yet why are we uneasy when de Boeldieu sacrifices his life to make good the escape of Marechal and Rosenthal? Why do we feel that the film has unwittingly taken on a fascist expression? It is not what Renoir meant—quite the reverse. But it is very nearly what he actually says.

The solution is, I think, that Renoir has tried to say in film what could only be said in a long novel. The details of characterisation are missing. Rauffenstein and de Boeldieu will either remain enigmas (which they should not) or will be misunderstood (which is what actually happens). But the traditions, the long aristocratic corridors of time at the end of which they now appear, neat in their white gloves and sightless monocles—these we must imagine, if we can. And it is a bad thing to leave so much to the imagination.

# REVIEW OF REVIEWS

## The Hurricane

(John Ford—United Artists.)

Dorothy Lamour, Jon Hall, Mary Astor, C. Aubrey Smith.

Edited by

H. E. BLYTH

### REVIEW OF THE MONTH

Hollywood is the place where a $2,000,000 production can't be put over without spending an additional $40,000 or more for a one-night send-off. *The Hurricane* opened under a barrage of electrical glory the like of which I have never seen. The Carthay Circle was ablaze with diamonds, ermine, flashlight bulbs, newsreels, lipstick, and faces alert for the occasion. With cold-blooded evaluation, the master of ceremonies seeded the "big names" from the escorts and less-celebrated companions and whisked them to the microphone. The less important the name, the longer the speech. The longer the speech, the louder the orchestra. On and in the stars came, speaking their little pieces, smiling and waving to friends and foes; finally staggering into the darkened theatre, which by now *reeked* with various expensive perfumes.

*There*, I must say, *The Hurricane* came into its own. After the carefully calculated applause that greeted the credits—the ratio ran the gamut from Goldwyn (100%) to special effects cameraman (approximately 15%)—I thought I could give myself over to the picture. But no. As each player appeared for the first time on the screen, fresh applause. *Now*, I thought, the long-awaited moment has arrived. I am to see *The Hurricane*. In utter quiet (coughs no longer disturb me) the audience and I watched the island people assume character, we watched luxurious scenes of South Seas revelry and native life. We felt the impact of an approaching doom. We served with Terangi his wretched prison sentence, and escaped breathlessly each time with him. We saw a stupendous build-up of South Sea hurricane horror—first the rattling shutters and flickering candles, then a rapidly rising sea, an angry wind. Houses collapsed, trees were uprooted, the sea became a mountain of fury and foam, sweeping over the pitiable island as though it were a toy.

Hollywood is the place where, at a moment like this, audiences clap. I was catapulted back into a perfume-ridden orchestra section with brutal haste. I shivered. I tried to believe again the miracles being performed by Hollywood's cast and Hollywood's minute men, but I couldn't. So I cried. I got the credit of being tremendously moved by *The Hurricane*. I don't know. I was rudely interrupted from one of the most impressive excursions into illusion that I have ever experienced. The denouement of *The Hurricane* served admirably for nose-powdering through the house.

Hollywood is the place where *The Hurricane* will be praised in the *most* lavish terms. It is where a première will be held next week, the entire ceremony repeated, and audiences will audibly indulge their approval once more. There is a place where pictures should be made and not seen. Hollywood is the place.

—Katharine Best, *Stage*

**Dorothy Lamour and Jon Hall**

The hurricane, magnificent as it is, devours only about fifteen minutes of *Hurricane*, and there are long minutes earlier when the footage is merely being nibbled away. Oliver H. P. Garrett and Dudley Nichols, who did the adaptation, have moved leisurely into Nordhoff's and Hall's South Seas variation of *Les Miserables*. They have introduced the tale of Terangi *versus* the French Government with a shade too much emphasis upon the pastoral.

But the hurricane is one to blast you from the orchestra pit to the first mezzanine. It is a hurricane to film your eyes with spindrift, to beat at your ears with its thunder, to clutch at your heart and send your diaphragm vaulting over your floating rib into the region just south of your tonsils. The hurricane, in a good old movie word, is terrific. Palms are torn up by their roots and go swinging clumsily through howling space; coral reefs are torn apart and fling their jagged fragments against a defenceless beach; great combers surge over the land and engulf men and women whose screams of terror are in pantomime, mocked to silence by the howling rage of the wind. If this is make-believe, nature must make the best of it; she has been played to perfection.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

I doubt whether sound newsreels of an actual hurricane could have been any more sensational or hair-raising. The theatre seemed to sway under the powerful impact of twisting wind and crashing sea. The Earthquake effects in the film *San Francisco* takes on the character of a baby rattling a dish, compared to the remarkable coordination of sound, and imagery in *Hurricane*. The only phony part about the business is that while the upheaval took the lives of practically all the natives on the island, it lovingly spared every single one of the seven principal white actors. I have examined the cast and have found that not one of the chief players lost as much as a collar-button in the calamitous event. The fact is there was a purpose behind the hurricane. It just didn't happen for no reason. It came specifically as a warning that natives, living under the flag of Britain and France, cannot strike white men and get away with it.

—David Platt, *American Sunday Worker*

*Critical Summary*

*James Basevi, the special effects man who was responsible for the earthquake sequence in "San Francisco" and the locust swarms in "The Good Earth", has now surpassed himself with his scenes of tornado and destruction in "The Hurricane." At least it seems that those sadly overworked adjectives "stupendous", "sensational" and "colossal" for once provide an accurate estimate of what they seek to publicize. Mr. Basevi's hurricane is, undeniably, colossal and stupendous. It probably cost a great deal, but we should not blame Hollywood for doing such things on a big scale; they provide, after all, real film material, for here, above all else, is action and movement, and if sound is used, it is sound allied to action, not just talk. Moreover earthquakes and hurricanes are the especial province of the cinema, for these are things which the stage can never hope to imitate. And Hollywood, which seems to exaggerate almost everything, is yet probably only outdone in broadness of conception by Nature herself; one has only to look at the Mediterranean to realise that the sea is just that ridiculously vivid sort of blue that Technicolor has always made it out to be, only a bit more so.*

## Wells Fargo

(Frank Lloyd—Paramount.)
Joel McCrea, Frances Dee, Bob Burns.

Paramount, as recently recorded, have "gone west" with fervour. In this biography of the "Carter-Paterson" of the trails of '49, Mr. Zukor has produced what some will regard as the grandest of frontier sagas. Wells Fargo began by beating the official mail service to the frontier towns. Then, becoming more ambitious, they put civilisation into a stage coach and carried it 2,600 miles to California, when the gold boom was starting and the covered wagons advanced surely and yet more surely into the unknown. It is worth noting that the pioneers were mainly British—Scotch for the most part. Almost any drama of western conquest is an epic of British effort. We shall never see their like again. Before we round the trail into the future, let us turn and wave a hand to them.

—G. A. Atkinson, *The Sunday Referee*

Mr. Wells and Mr. Fargo were business partners of a century ago, when to travel to or communicate with Buffalo from New York was a startling and hazardous enterprise. But Mr. Wells, like his namesake of our time, had big ideas and a gift of vision. He wanted to see regular express communication established with far-away California. It was tough going, but Mr. Wells did it eventually, largely, according to this film, through the courage, energy, and enterprise of a young man called Ramsay MacKay, whom, for convenience, we will call Joel McCrea. All this pioneering disrupted Mr. McCrea's private life, parting him from Frances Dee until their hair had turned to silver and the film had all but run its 115 minutes. I insist on one dogmatic objection: Mackay rhymes with sigh; never with say.

—Stephen Watts, *The Sunday Express*

## The Toast of New York

(Rowland V. Lee—RKO Radio.)
Edward Arnold, Cary Grant, Frances Farmer, Jack Oakie.

*The Toast of New York* is the tale of Fisk. Edward Arnold, with his great gurgling laugh and his portly frame, plays the showman who outwitted the shrewd financier, Daniel Drew, and challenged the power of Cornelius Vanderbilt, both prominent characters in the picture. Fisk's life is great film stuff. Dressed in fancy uniform, he is driving a four-horse pedlar's wagon when the Civil War breaks out, along with two cronies, played by Cary Grant and Jack Oakie. He sees the chance of smuggling cotton from the South and he makes a fortune by it, only to find that after the war the dumb Oakie has invested the money in Confederate bonds. A big, riotous, merry film, with Frances Farmer as the beautiful actress for whom Fisk bought an opera house, and a first-class production by Radio.

—Ian Coster, *The Evening Standard*

Glorifying, I'm afraid, the American crook once more. Jim Fisk, "the big, red-blooded heman" of the official synopsis of the picture, is as jolly and kindly as that admirable actor Edward Arnold can make him, but for all his ingenious go-getting he remains a fraud, and a prison sentence would have been a more just reward than a suicide's smiling exit. The title refers to Frances Farmer, so it is wholly justified.

—Stephen Watts, *The Sunday Express*

### W.F.N. Selection.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Stage Door* | * | * |
| *Popeye the Sailor Meets Ali Baba's Forty Thieves* | * | * |
| *It's Love I'm After* | * | |
| *The Hurricane* | * | |
| *True Confession* | * | |
| *South Riding* | * | |
| *The Toast of New York* | * | |
| *Underworld* | * | |

### *Other Films covered in this issue*

*The Great Garrick* (Stars reserved)

*Thoroughbreds Don't Cry* (Stars reserved)

*Perfect Specimen*

*Wells Fargo*

*The Divorce of Lady X*

*Smash and Grab*

*The Return of the Scarlet Pimpernel*

*La Grande Illusion*

*Amphitryon*

*Late Mathias Pascal*

## The Divorce of Lady X

(Tim Whelan—London Films.)

Merle Oberon, Laurence Olivier, Binnie Barnes, Ralph Richardson, Morton Selten.

*Lady X* is a Technicolor re-make of Korda's old comedy, *Counsel's Opinion*, or *Who Was the Girl in the Royal Parks Hotel?* It is brittle, chatty, stuff, bright and competent enough, but superbly unimportant, and except for Mr. Richardson's ripe comedy performance as a huntin' and divorcin' peer, the interest is mainly in the haberdashery.

Technicolour, I find, makes one acutely clothes-conscious, and I can really tell you less about the stars' acting than about Miss Oberon's wardrobe and Mr. Olivier's slumberwear. I was specially intrigued by Mr. Olivier's line in shirts, which range from cornflower blue to palest acid drop. There is a particularly snappy number in light banana that I must remember to ask him about some time. It gives the face a faint phosphorescent colour, wan and gently limelit, and can be recommended to those who feel like nothing on earth in the morning when breakfasting with the unseasonably gay.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

Falls between the two schools of sophisticated comedy and "roaring" farce. Merle Oberon irritatingly coy as a bed snatcher, and Laurence Olivier forced to clown for laughs. Ralph Richardson steals show with a gloriously inebriated scene. Pleasant break if on shopping expedition.

—Harris Deans, *The Sunday Graphic*

## The Great Garrick

(James Whale—Warner Brothers.)
Brian Aherne, Olivia de Havilland, Edward Everett Horton.

Of the many legends about David Garrick, that almost legendary figure of the eighteenth century theatre, count as one of the most amusing *The Great Garrick*. Here is no ponderous biography, worshipful, solemnly paced, leaning heavily upon the encyclopaedia, but a jestful and romantic piece which has drawn its hero to the life while employing a gay fiction as its model. This might have happened, explains Ernest Vajda, its author, in the prologue. If it did, so much the better; if not, Garrick missed a joyous adventure.

Garrick has been more fortunate than most in his screen reincarnations. A few seasons ago, when England's *Peg of Old Drury* was chronicling his middle years, we had Sir Cedric Hardwicke to strut and sham and declaim as the very model of an ageing matinee idol. Now, as the camera takes still more of his years away, there is Brian Aherne to present Garrick as the young and handsome swashbuckler we rather hoped to find. A bravura actor, Mr. Aherne, with a flair for the dramatic handling of a cloak, an easy grace with his ruffles, a penchant for striding across a spellbound stage. We felt his kinship with the man he played, both probably having a deliciously slight trace of Smithfield in their blood.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

The story of this polite sketch is almost as fancy as the eighteenth-century clothes, and seemed to me as spontaneous as an Elsa Maxwell costume party, but there is a neatness and nice good humour which makes it agreeable. It's about the actor, of course, and how the staff of the Théatre Française once took him for a ride, and how he turned the tables on them. It is a little bit like one of those big, unwieldy practical jokes people work up, but it is brightly enough managed, and the joke isn't on us customers.

John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

"An easy grace with his ruffles . . ."

"Not Miss Lombard's fault . . ."

## True Confession

(Wesley Ruggles—Paramount.)
Carole Lombard, Fred MacMurray, John Barrymore, Una Merkel.

I plead the justification of the title for admitting that I fail entirely to see by what charm or talent Mr. Fred MacMurray has deserved to be cast four times opposite Miss Carole Lombard. Dripping and champagne don't mix. This is another of the cycle of crazy comedies, built around Carole's captivating habit of telling "little white lies" and the consequences of her confessing to murder so that MacMurray, as her lawyer-husband, can win her sensational acquittal and make his fame as an advocate. Carole is a delight, and the film is studded with any number of hearty laughs. Una Merkel, John Barrymore, and Porter Hall help things along gaily.

—*The Jewish Chronicle*

Without exception this is the funniest film to come from America in 1937. The humour of the piece lies not in the plot but in the acting, and it is Miss Lombard's acting that makes this film. To fib wittily, charmingly, repeatedly and with conviction requires talent of no mean order. Miss Lombard contrives cleverly to show the fibs welling up in her spontaneously until they simply have to burst out. The scene where she defeats the hire-purchase man who has come for her typewriter by pretending that her husband is mad, she has lost her baby and her husband believes the typewriter is the vanished child, all in an elaborate story apparently made up on the spur of the moment, is one of the most brilliant individual performances I have seen for some time. If this film does not set half London laughing, it is certainly not Miss Lombard's fault.

—John Coverdale, *Time and Tide*

*Critical Summary*

*Although "My Man Godfrey" is usually considered to be the film which gave birth to the present vogue for craziness, one is inclined to trace its origin farther back than that; no doubt the Marx Brothers are at the root of the matter. But the Marx Brothers remain a law unto themselves, even though so many have tried, with but little success, to follow in their footsteps—the Ritz Brothers, for example, come readily to mind. Still, the standard of craziness so far has been unexpectedly high, but one looks to the future with some misgivings.*

## Smash and Grab

(Tim Whelan—Jack Buchanan Production.)
Jack Buchanan, Elsie Randolph.

Jack Buchanan, in *Smash and Grab*, has made his best picture for five years. He plays a private detective employed by insurance companies to track down jewel robberies, aided by his glamorous and sporting wife, who is not averse, in the cause of justice, to do a little gentle vamping. Not a single song or dance intrudes into the story, and Jack, who never has to force his charm on you to cover up story blemishes, does a grand job of ingratiating ubiquity, partnered with immense assurance by Elsie Randolph. In fact, Tim Whelan, the director, has boldly followed in the footsteps of W. S. Van Dyke in building up a British *Thin Man* technique of snappy thrills and smart dialogue. What is more important is that he has, on the whole, succeeded.

—P. L. Mannock, *The Daily Herald*

If Mr. Jack Buchanan is not careful he will find himself almost alone in the British film industry. Since he has turned producer he has made two good pictures in succession. His first, *The Sky's The Limit*, was full of bright ideas, and now he has made *Smash and Grab*, which is one of the brightest films, without being pretentious, that I have seen for a long time. It is a comedy thriller, and although Jack plays the lead, he neither sings nor dances, but confines himself to comedy. I like Buchanan's long legs and his slightly plaintive singing voice, and the best compliment I can pay him is to say that in *Smash and Grab* I missed neither. Instead I thoroughly enjoyed a continuity of bright dialogue, clever, naturally contrived "business," and one or two thrills that do not spoil the comedy by being too hair-raising. *Smash and Grab* is a fine example of what English studios can do if they try. The picture, I am certain, did not cost so much that it cannot earn a nice profit, yet it does not look cheap, because it was obviously thoroughly well thought out and prepared before production started.

—Richard Haestier, *The Star*

*Critical Summary*

*Only last month we were grumbling in these columns about the wretchedly poor material that had been given to Jack Buchanan in his English pictures—we still recall "Brewster's Millions" with a shudder. "Smash and Grab", therefore, has come as a most welcome surprise, and we readily agree with the many critics who hold it to be one of his best for several years. At the same time we do not for a moment suggest that he should give up his musicals altogether; in an age of torch-singers and mournful crooners it is refreshing to find someone who can sing a sentimental song sentimentally, but without a surfeit of treacle—personally we wouldn't exchange a Melville Gideon or a Jack Buchanan for a dozen Rudy Vallees.*

## Thoroughbreds Don't Cry

(Alfred E. Green—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.)
Mickey Rooney, Ronald Sinclair, Sophie Tucker, C. Aubrey Smith.

You can't indict a nation, said Burke. Neither, legally, can you libel one. Otherwise, I feel, the whole British Empire would be entitled to sue Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and claim the most vindictive damages. The Wodehouse heroes, the monocled, dim-witted lords, the asinine butlers—these I can forgive as clean fun, though somewhat outmoded. But Hollywood's English schoolboy is frankly intolerable. Where, in heaven's name, does he come from? This ineffable sententiousness, these frightful platitudes, this unutterable priggishness—has somebody been studying current English boyhood in the pages of Dean Farrar, or what? The usual victim of this conspiracy (apart from the audience, of course) is poor little Freddie Bartholomew. In *Thoroughbreds Don't Cry* the victim is Ronald Sinclair, playing a fourteen-year-old sprig of the English nobility opposite the American tough guy of sixteen (Mickey Rooney). Really, this sort of thing won't do.

—George Campbell, *The Bystander*

Quite frankly this is one of the best and one of the most exciting films I have ever seen. Moreover, it does exactly what the film ought to do. It does not contain a single ounce of art, montage or other hokum. It has neither poise, urgency nor spatial rhythm. It is just a damned good yarn of the turf told with immense gusto and photographed in the lovely American sunlight. The story is preposterous, as goes without saying. I can only tell readers that I found this extraordinarily exciting. Indeed, if I could be sure of finding one film per month as good as this I should alter my entire attitude to the cinema. By the way, I am astonished that my colleagues should complain at the spoof English given to the English boy in this film. It is a legitimate return for some of the nonsense we pull about the American way of talking.

—James Agate, *The Tatler*

*Critical Summary*

*This department, which has always prided itself on being somewhat of an authority on racing, has yet never been able to comprehend the code of ethics under which racing in the States is carried out, or at least as it is carried out on the screen. We cannot recall having ever seen a race that has been fairly run, and dope, intimidation, bumping, boring and general interference are accepted as a matter of course; like the football pool lists, nothing is barred. Every American jockey appears to be crooked, and all of them look about sixteen, this being the age, we assume, at which they are let out of the local reform schools. Even a study of Damon Runyon cannot really prepare us for what we must expect in the cinema; Hot Horse Herbie, we feel, would be quite outclassed by these Hollywood thugs.*

"Damned good yarn of the turf . . ."

## The Return of the Scarlet Pimpernel

(Hans Schwarz—London Films.)
Barry K. Barnes, Sophie Stewart, Francis Lister, Margaretta Scott, James Mason.

Pleasant as it is to renew acquaintance with Sir Percy Blakeney and his charming wife, the meeting is not altogether satisfactory. There is more than a suggestion in this film that Sir Percy is one of the new poor, and consequently Regency England is not as lavish as the previous adaptation of the hero's life showed it. In so essentially a romantic story the colours of popular fiction should not be allowed to fade and the background of the fashionable world should be boldly, even extravagantly, drawn, if the sense of the period is to be properly conveyed. Here the cricket match which opens the film and shows Blakeney at the wicket is not an aristocratic pastime carrying heavy wagers, but a mild curiosity. Even the Regency pavilion seems to have shrunk. Once out of England and into France, the *tempo* of the film is very properly accelerated, and intrigues, perils, and escapes flow continuously across the screen, but the film would have been stronger and even more exciting had the Pimpernel been less "demn'd elusive." —*The Times*

**"Their demon bowler has no terrors for Percy . . ."**

This latest chapter in the well-known sporting serial opens with Sir Percy Blakeney, prominent clubman and escapologist, playing in a cricket match at Brighton. "Their demon bowler has no terrors for Percy," cries one of his admirers; which would have been even more remarkable if the two balls dealt with by the Bradman of the Revolution had not both been slow full-tosses. On tour in France against Robespierre's Eleven, with a lot of women barrackers knitting on the Hill, Sir Percy has to face some nasty bodyline stuff on a bad wicket. Need I add that he carries his bat triumphantly, Robespierre is dismissed without addition to his score, and even Chauvelin learns to play the game with a straight bat, the cad.

—Campbell Dixon, *The Daily Telegraph*

*Critical Summary*

*The present film lacks the subtlety and the fine atmosphere of suspense which characterised the work of Leslie Howard and Raymond Massey; and Sir Percy Blakeney, now no longer deceiving us with the manners of a lackadaisical fop, is a far less intriguing person than before. But had there been nothing with which to compare this picture we no doubt should have found it very passable entertainment.*

## Underworld

(Jean Renoir—French.)
Louis Jouvet, Jean Gabin, Suzy Prim, Jany Holt, Vladimir Sokoloff, Junie Astor.

In its translation to the screen, *The Lower Depths* shows a remarkable vitality, a singular ability to remain eloquent without the aid of dialogue. It would have succeeded as a silent film, which is a tribute, of course, to the essential humanity of Gorki; his figures live before they speak. Yet there is a grand thrust in some of the dialogue, a sharp point of savage wit. The theme, which is almost anything you like to read into it beyond the bare facts of wealth humbled and poverty exalted, is never wholly given over to what is sombre. The dosshouse crowd are as authentic as could be wished, the beating to death of Kostylev is done with swift and unerring realism—but one never feels that *Underworld* is a presentment of evil as bitter and haunting as was seen in *Broken Blossoms*. The end is in a streak of happiness, conventional enough for a novelette, though marked, again, by shrewd directiom.

Jean Gabin plays Pepel with a deadly calmness in the early scenes, letting warmth of disposition and a hankering for more than the life of crime emerge as stealthily as the sun from December clouds. And in Suzy Prim as Vassilissa he has a partner of excellent skill in the slow redemption of gloom. But Louis Jouvet's "Le Baron" is the outstanding accomplishment. He, raw-boned and glittering of eye, stalks with the same hint of heroic detachment through the dosshouse as through the gambling den of luxury; and like the Ancient Mariner, he would fasten our attention whether we willed it or not.

—*The Birmingham Mail*

## Amphitryon

(Schunzel and Valentin—French.)
Henri Garat, Armand Bernard, Jeanne Boitel, Odette Florelle, Marguerite Moreno.

The legend of how Jupiter descending incognito upon a war-widowed Thebes, nearly tricked Amphitryon's wife into infidelity by assuming the absent General's shape, and how he was fooled, is so good a tale that it is no surprise to learn that there are 38 known versions of it for the theatre. And, indeed, what in essence was any *Palais Royale* farce but this? The treatment may be fairly likened to that of an operetta by Offenbach or Messager, minus the speed, the witty lines, and the genuinely gay music. The players are good, and could easily make much of even mediocre material, but the direction and timing are such that point after point goes for nothing, and we either watch a scene too long until it is tedious or are flicked away from it before the point has gone home. There are some tedious passages, but before the end the *tempo* quickens and the total effect is of jollity if not of dazzling wit. Florelle, best of soubrettes, warms up some rather tepid ditties enticingly; several handsome ladies parade about with grace, and the views of Theban life are droll in the *Bouffes-Parisiens* manner. Above all, there is Mme. Marguerite Moreno, as Juno, with a terrifying "Où est mon mari?" in every look and gesture, and she enlivens any situation in which she appears. But the same cannot be said of M. Henri Garat, whose performance in the dual part of god and man falls short of what might be expected of the hero of *Il est Charmant* and M. Armand Bernard, as a rheumatic Mercury in a Nellie Wallace hat, accomplishes little for so

**"Jollity, not dazzling wit . . ."**

genuine a comic. In all, this reduction of a good story to terms of musical comedy misses too many opportunities for wit and satire to be rated as more than a mildly amusing entertainment.

*The Times*

Possibly as a concession to various censorship boards the film departs from the accepted story in that the conception of Hercules definitely does not take place. But this is made up for by the rather charming modernity of both gods and mortals, who burst into the metallic recitative of early musical comedy and despatch and receive prayers labelled "priority."

In any case, when Marguerite Moreno, as the outraged spouse of Zeus, is on the screen, all else is forgiven and forgotten; her grim determination to be the best-dressed woman on Olympus is worth all the jokes about infidelity, all the pretty *mädchens*, and all the sets that look like parts of the Nürnberg stadium, which make up the bulk of this curiously indeterminate piece of film-making.

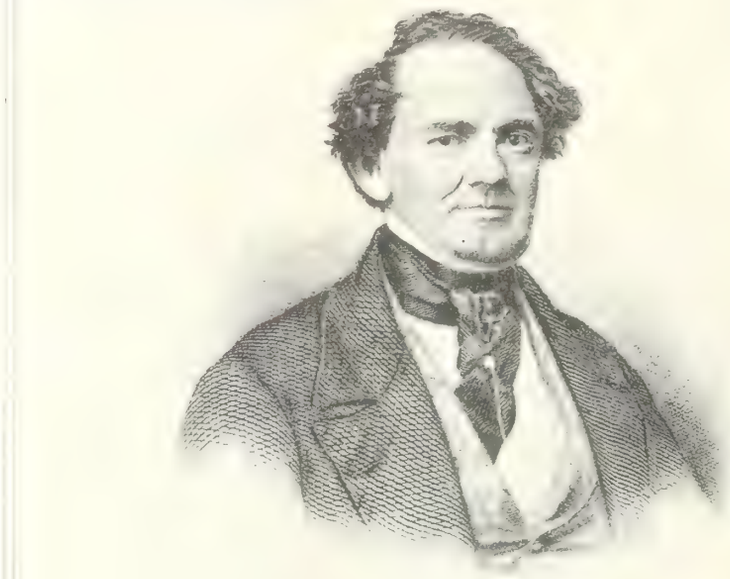
—Basil Wright, *The Spectator*

## Late Mathias Pascal

(Pierre Chenal—French.)
Pierre Blanchar, Catherine Fonteney.

Pierre Chenal, the director of *Late Mathias Pascal*, has deliberately scattered his original. I say deliberately because M. Chenal, who also directed *Crime et Châtiment*, is beyond question an artist who knows what he is doing. His conscious desire in this case must have been to let air and sunlight into his story, to leave it somehow better-natured than it was. He has done so in the first place as any director might do it, by distributing intercalary scenes which show all the steps in the narrative as they are taken—the hero on a train, the hero lugging his suitcase through a park, and so on. But in the second place he has proceeded with subtlety to throw over the whole affair a very pleasant mantle of homely absurdity. His people, his story, and his manner of manipulating them are alike in that they seem in some attractive way old-fashioned, in some artful way awkward. He has taken down Pirandello's famous intensity several dozen pegs, but he has wanted to do this for the sake of another effect; and because, no doubt, he couldn't quite believe that Pirandello was as profound as he seemed. He has been at once critical and affectionate toward his material, moving in without apology and making himself charmingly at home among the episodes. The result is origiral and delightful beyond most films of France or of any other country.

—Mark Van Doren, *The Nation*



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| Granada | Willesden |
| Granada | Welling |
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| Cinema | Loughton |
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| Empire | Edmonton |
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| King's | Shrewsbury |
| Plaza | Mansfield |
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| Rialto | Enfield |
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| Granada | Slough |

*Under Construction*

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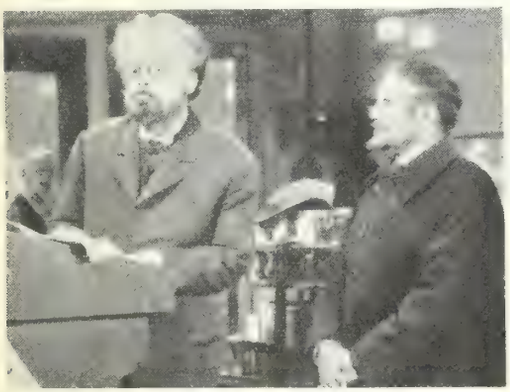
| Granada | East Molesey |
| Granada | Woodford |

# The MONTH'S RELEASES

THE two outstanding films for general release in February are **The Life of Emile Zola** and **They Won't Forget.** Miss these two films and you miss two of the cinema's greatest achievements.

For sheer holding-power and suspense **They Won't Forget** is unbeatable. Don't make the mistake of thinking that, because the critics have labelled the film great, it is dull; it is tip-top melodrama throughout. It is the story of the assault and murder of a business college girl student in a town in the Southern States of America and the gradual building up of prejudice and passion against a school teacher from the North who is tried and convicted for the murder. He is reprieved and lynched. Brilliant direction and acting make this one of the most enthralling pictures ever made. There are no top-liners in the cast, but the acting is uniformly fine, with Claude Rains at his best as the prosecuting District Attorney.

**The Life of Emile Zola** stands out for the fine performance of Paul Muni as Zola; for its historical accuracy and sincerity of treatment and for its dramatic vibrance. Sketching Emile Zola's early struggles and rise to fame, the film recounts the Dreyfus case and Zola's fight to free Dreyfus.



*"The Life of Emile Zola"*

Exciting and moving, and for all its traffic with the past, speaking a timely word for freedom, justice and truth.

Spectacular and starring Gary Cooper and George Raft, **Souls at Sea** is nevertheless disappointing in some respects. It began as the story of the sinking of the "William Brown," a packet lost at sea in 1841. With more passengers and crew than the boats could carry, one man took command and forming a three-man jury, himself, a negro and a seaman, sat in judgment over the others, deciding who was to be saved and who left to drown. For this he was put on trial. The makers of the film have added to this story, making the seaman an opponent of the slave traffic, and the boat a slaver. Savage slave trading scenes, the trial of the seamen, and a spectacular shipwreck, make it an exciting and entertaining picture, despite its shortcomings.

The comedies to be seen this month include the new Leslie Howard film **It's Love I'm After,** with Bette Davis and Olivia de Havilland. It is the story of an actor's attempt to cure a young girl of her infatuation for him by disillusioning her. The subsequent complications and the fooling of the indignant, protesting, Eric Blore, provide many laughs. **Double Wedding** is another piece of M.G.M. sophisticated slapstick, with Myrna

*Wanger's "Vogues of 1938"*

Loy and William Powell. Just the film for those in search of laughter and a rest from over-profound thinking. **New Faces of 1937** has no outstanding stars but it has been highly praised by the critics for its humour and entertainment value.

**Vogues of 1938** is of particular interest to women. It is not only a parade of the latest fashions, but has a story and some good variety. **Lovely to Look At** is Sonja Henie doing her stuff on ice, surrounded by a showy ballet. Miss Henie is breath-taking on ice but the ballet sequences drag. **The Firefly** is about Spain's resistance to Napoleon, with Jeanette MacDonald, as a secret agent, singing long and loud. Over long and with many dull patches, the film is a strong argument in favour of the five-day week. **Stella Dallas,** a remake of the 1925 success, is good for the handkerchief trade, with Barbara Stanwyck striving in vain to win the acting laurels once captured by Belle Bennett in the same rôle. Those who saw Miss Stanwyck in **The Plough and the Stars** will know what to expect.

**Blonde Trouble** is a remake of "June Moon", a play by Ring Lardner and George S. Kaufman. Good entertainment, featuring some of Paramount's younger players, including Eleanore Whitney and Johnny Downs; some good music and some laughs.

Among the British films released are George Formby's **Keep Fit,** Jack Buchanan's **The Sky's the Limit,** and Arliss's **Dr. Syn.** The latter deals with smuggling, so much a part of our English coast-land tradition that it might have been a satisfying picture of English life instead of the naïve and unreal film it is.

*"Dr. Syn"*

**The Life of Emile Zola** (Warner Bros).
*DIRECTOR:* William Dieterle
*STARRING:* Paul Muni
Gale Sondergaard
Joseph Schildkraut
Vladimir Sokoloff
(Reviewed November and December *W.F.N.*)

**They Won't Forget** (Warner Bros.).
*DIRECTOR:* Mervyn LeRoy
*STARRING:* Claude Rains
Edward Norris
Gloria Dickson
(Reviewed October and December *W.F.N.*)

**It's Love I'm After** (Warner Bros.).
*DIRECTOR:* Archie L. Mayo
*STARRING:* Leslie Howard
Bette Davis
Olivia de Havilland

**Double Wedding** (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer)
*DIRECTOR:* Richard Thorpe
*STARRING:* William Powell
Myrna Loy
Florence Rice
John Beal
(Reviewed December *W.F.N.*)

**Souls at Sea** (Paramount)
*DIRECTOR:* Henry Hathaway
*STARRING:* Gary Cooper
George Raft
Frances Dee
Olympe Bradna
(Reviewed October)

**Stella Dallas** (United Artists).
*DIRECTOR:* King Vidor
*STARRING:* Barbara Stanwyck
John Boles
Anne Shirley
(Reviewed December *W.F.N.*)

**The Firefly** (Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer).
*DIRECTOR:* Robert Z. Leonard
*STARRING:* Jeanette MacDonald
Allan Jones
Warren Williams

**Walter Wanger's Vogues of 1938** (United Artists)
*DIRECTOR:* Irving Cummings
*STARRING:* Warner Baxter
Joan Bennett
Helen Vinson
(Reviewed January *W.F.N.*)

**Lovely to Look At** (20th Century-Fox).
*DIRECTOR:* Sidney Lanfield
*STARRING:* Sonja Henie
Tyrone Power

**New Faces of 1937** (Radio).
*DIRECTOR:* Leigh Jason
*STARRING:* Joe Penner
Parkyakarkus
Milton Berle
Harriet Hilliard

**Wife Doctor and Nurse** (20th Century-Fox).
*DIRECTOR:* Walter Lang
*STARRING:* Warner Baxter
Loretta Young
Virginia Bruce
(Reviewed January *W.F.N.*)

**Keep Fit** (A.T.P.).
*DIRECTOR:* Anthony Kimmins
*STARRING:* George Formby
Kay Walsh
Guy Middleton

**Blonde Trouble** (Paramount).
*DIRECTOR:* George Archainbaud
*STARRING:* Eleanore Whitney
Johnny Downs
Lynne Overman
Terry Walker

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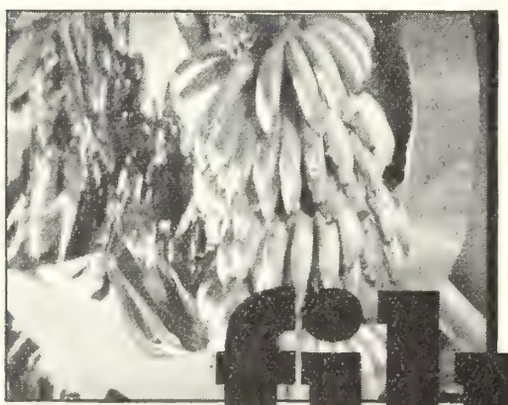

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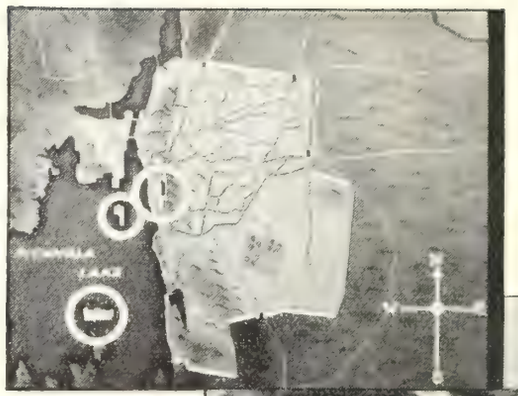

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*1. History*

*2. Nature Study*

*3. Geography*

*4. Geography*

*5. Agriculture*

# new GBI films 1938

**WRITE OR TELEPHONE for the TO GB INSTRUCTIONAL FILMS BUREAU FILM HOUSE, WARDOUR ST., LONDON, W.I. Gerrard 9292**

# 4th list

# MANAGERS and MOVIEGOERS

**The L.C.C.'s plan to prevent alteration of cinema seat prices at busy periods is widely supported by cinemagoers. Relations between Exhibitors and their patrons are discussed in this article.**

IT has probably occurred to everyone that it is high time that the people who make films and the people who see them should get together. The former claim that they have no way of telling what the public likes and that every film is a commercial gamble. The latter have a million individual complaints but no way of voicing them. As cinemagoers they have no rights at all, except the right of staying away.

The film industry has done its job pretty well and that is the reason why few major issues have arisen in this country between the cinema and the public. However, film news reveals this month a minor sensation. On the complaint of a patron the London County Council threatens to introduce regulations that will fix the price of seats. Alteration of seat prices according to the popularity of a film has been fairly common and it is a practice that has irritated the public. But it seems that the cinema people are not anxious to part with this right and are prepared to gamble on the docility of the public.

The suffering public is in fact completely at the mercy of the film industry until some method of organised protest is evolved. In the meantime the public has got so accustomed to its regular dose of dope that it is unable to exercise its one and only right—of staying away.

The film industry has tried very hard to reach the public mind, but, I am afraid, only for selfish reasons—to increase box-office returns. Their point of view is expressed frankly in a book *The Complete Kinemanager* (Kinematograph Publications Ltd.), by J. S. Hutchison, a circuit house manager.

Here is a quotation from a chapter headed "Contact with Patrons" in which Mr. Hutchison gives advice to managers:

"A question (to a patron) about the quality of the show is particularly dangerous if the manager has any reasons to assume that the programme is not good. He dare not risk a lie because every statement and advertisement for which he is responsible will be disbelieved by the patron who at any time discovers that a statement is untrue. It is always possible to frame some evasive answer such as 'The programme is going very well but it may not be your type'. It is reasonable to assume that a similar statement is not likely to lose a customer, as once a patron has gone so far as the pay-box, he is seldom discouraged from going inside. A useful general rule is never to say anything to an incoming patron that is likely to be challenged when you meet him coming out.

"The same reasoning applies to a departing patron who states that the show is rotten. . . Let us analyse the patron's mind when he comes out and sees the manager. He has disliked the show, he considers the evening wasted, and in the manager he sees an opportunity to air his grievances. Is it reasonable to assume that the manager may by argument cause the patron to change his mind? Surely an argument or negation of that statement is likely to infuriate the patron still more. Suppose for example that the manager argues that the films are very good, and that the patron is wrong, it does not seem possible that he will be convinced. He is much more likely to assume that if the current show is an example of what the manager thinks is a good show, then the kinema concerned, is one to be avoided. Again there is an opportunity here for an evasive answer."

An amusing passage concerns "Noise and Disturbance."

"Complaints are occasionally made about noise emanating from other patrons. This is a very delicate complaint to handle, and should be attended to by the manager personally. The danger is, that one may so easily offend the patron about whom the complaint is made, and it is not good business to satisfy one customer at the expense of another's good will. The usual procedure is to approach the offending parties with an apology for disturbing them. This may be followed by a brief reference to the complaint and an appeal for co-operation in satisfying a difficult customer. Most patrons react favourably to this method of approach. If it is not successful, a sterner admonition may be necessary."

THE film industry is inclined to treat "the audience" as a child—incalculable, irrational and undisciplined—and its efforts to amuse the child are not tempered with either sympathy or understanding.

Audience reaction remains an enigma. For no earthly reason one film makes money and another doesn't. Ballyhoo helps little, statistics don't help at all. One renting company I know keeps a gang of tame patrons and books films when their viewing reports agree. But often their combined opinion turns out be no guide whatever. Cinema managers with lifelong experience, will tell you that the thing is a matter of chance. Film companies have employed psychologists to study the subject and scouts are sent to sit with the audience and listen to chance remarks. No-one has yet learned the secret and the audience won't tell.

Why do we go to the movies? Let's be frank. Some of us, dull ones, go with mind alert, ready to criticise or commend, anxious to tell the lads at the office or the folk next door that we've been and we're up to date with the world. Some of us go out of habit, because it's a cheap way to spend an evening. Some of us go for warmth and comfort and a chance to sleep in peace. Some of us are tired and worried and want to live someone else's life for a little while.

Most of us though, pay our money at the box-office with a secret thrill in our hearts and a childlike hope in our eyes. We may hope for a miraculous revelation of the meaning of things; we may hope to feel more keenly, to laugh or cry or get excited; at worst we hope to be entertained.

Each of us is much like the youngster who has been promised a lollypop. We want it red, or maybe blue or green, but it must have an interesting flavour. And when we get it, we are slightly disappointed, but not enough to renounce lollypops for life.

In other words, when we go to the cinema we want to leave it with a little more happiness than when we entered, we want our ideals left intact and our emotions pleasantly titillated. The film people don't want to disappoint. So they strive to uphold our ideals: they give us glittering sets, to please our eyes; they tell us that things come out right in the long run, to make us happy and they throw in crime, illicit sex, misfortunes and heroics, to stimulate our emotions.

We are the dog. They try one combination on us and if it succeeds they repeat it with minor variations. When we get bored, they swing right over and give us another combination.

Most of us just sit back and let things ride. If we don't like it, we don't usually trouble to say so. In any case the magnificent upholstery and carpets, the stars on the ceiling, and the pained aloofness of the attendants frightens us too much. We sneak through the exit, maybe at the most, giving the commissionaire a dirty look.

But unless more of us appeal to the manager or unless we organise some more efficient way of making our minds known, there will continue to be films that bore and annoy us, seat prices will remain arbitrary and the film people will go on thinking we are morons.

Perhaps if the film-makers were to regard the public as a collection of individuals much like themselves; perhaps if they were even to treat us as adults, with self respect and an intelligent interest in adult affairs; perhaps if they were (as Mr. Hutchison suggests) to earn respect for the industry by reason of disinterested service to the public, and perhaps if they were to concentrate just a little less on exploitation, the problem of box-office appeal might not loom so large.

MARION FRASER

## NEXT GENTLEMAN, PLEASE

Baldness is said to be the newest menace to the male stars of Hollywood. Several of them are wearing toupées in their pictures, and men's hairdressers now rank equal in importance to women's slimming experts.

O, it is rather diabolical
That fame depends upon the follicle,
For reputations everywhere
Are hanging by a single hair.
Each truant tendril in the comb
Means one more fan who stays at home;
Each application of restorer
Another gone-for-good adorer.
So long as you are good and hairy
You'll be a Clark, a Paul, a Gary,
But with a mere half-crowning glory,
Of course, it's quite another story.
You'll try, but you will try in vain—
What good is might, when you've no mane?
*O, movie-star, when fully-thatched,*
*Full many a golden egg you've hatched;*
*But when the tresses leave the brow,*
*A box-office disaster thou.*

## Callous? Lets!

Little Elsie looked so sweet,
Patting horse in the street.
Her parents look quite nice in black—
A dray-horse patted Elsie back.

"Sure . . . I know what B.O. means, ya skunk!"

## Bigger than Barnum's —and probably funnier

*World Film News*' Gigantic Circus and Fun Fair has just completed an enormously successful season on a patch of waste ground in Wardour Street.

With its three rings in action simultaneously, its clever blending of new acts and all your old favourites, it has given pleasure to thousands, including many prominent British film personalities who came in to get out of the cold.

One of the most sensational acts was undoubtedly that of "La Belle Lejeune," whose clever knife-throwing was rapturously received by one and all. "The Great Alex," too, was heartily applauded for his Word-Swallowing act.

With the children, of course, the clowns were first favourites. These clever tumblers and knockabouts were recruited this year from the ranks of the film-critics and caused much merriment, constantly falling down for no good reason. Many showed themselves to be accomplished contortionists by continually patting themselves on the back.

Among the side-shows, Alf. Hitchcock, billed as "The Human Hairpin," was a popular attraction, while "The Four Financiers" mystified everyone by their clever juggling.

The troupe of Giraffe-Necked Women, kindly lent by the Censorship Office, caused a good deal of raucous laughter and one or two dirty cracks from the patrons.

"Aubrey and Ernie" proved themselves an amusing pair of cross-talk comedians. Speculation was rife among the audience as to the identity of "Britain's Only Yogi", reported to be a film magnate, who remained suspended in a horizontal position ten feet above the circus-ring for three weeks, without moving a muscle. He was afterwards thrown to the lions, but was thrown back.

Altogether the utmost good humour prevailed. Only one ugly scene occurred, when two well-known stars came to blows in the "Tunnel of Love." The helter-skelter was particularly popular, and the frantic squeals of investors as they felt themselves falling went on far into the night.

The organisers are anxious to trace the whereabouts of a number of performing seals, who disappeared from their dressing-rooms on the last night of the show. It is feared that they may have been persuaded to join the board of a certain film-company known to be in deep water.

DON'T BE A STAND-IN ALL YOUR LIFE—SIT DOWN ONCE IN A WHILE

## *SEA FEVER—* *WITH COMPLIMENTS*

*The Royal Naval Film Corporation, an organisation to provide films for the major part of the sea-going Fleet, has just been inaugurated.*

*It is understood that ships of the Fleet will be given best-grade films at about the time of their general release in this country.*

*—News Item.*

I must down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a movie and a star to glorify,
And Miss Dietrich and Miss Colbert and the showgirls shaking,
And a theme-song and a wisecrack and a Technicolor dawn breaking.

I must down to the seas again, for the call of the gangsters' ride
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is the Bowery and the bullets flying,
And the D.A. and the death-cell and Miss Temple crying.

I must down to the seas again, to the gay Long Island life,
To the boudoir and the bath-tub and of course the erring wife;
And all I ask is a seat on the aisle with a laughing fellow-rover,
And a Donald Duck and a newsreel when the big picture's over.

No, really, I couldn't take any money for that. It's as much Mr. Masefield's as it is mine. But we shall know now what to do with the drunken sailor, shan't we? We'll take him below and sober him up with a good back-stage musical. That'll teach him, the beast.

## Ode to an Art Director

A Streatham bedroom with a Grecian pillar,
A cock-eyed arch to each suburban villa,
A pair of Woolworth's Mings—
These darn-fool things, remind me of you.

Those cosy lounges, built in easy stages,
Are copied from the front of Mr. Drage's,
And how each stair-case swings:
These crazy things, remind me of you.

How strange! How swell! if you could build—a set to shoot in, so
the walls could *not* waggle to and fro,
A lovely wrinkled photographic backing
whose edges show whenever we start tracking,
Oh, how the ghost of them clings!
These half-wit things, remind me of you.

W. F. E.

# LORUM

**odney Hobson**

## Pass the Custard-pies, Sir John

*Sounds of a scuffle, a shout of "Oi" and the slamming of a door broke into the ten o'clock B.B.C. news summary last night.*

*The noise drowned the announcer's voice. Several people—a woman among them—were heard arguing. One of them said something to the effect, "I think it would be better to put him over there."* —*News Item.*

As one from whom the B.B.C. have no secrets—my aunt empties the waste-paper-baskets for them—I am able to cast a little light upon the disturbance which set British listeners back on their rubber heels with such a rude shock.

Many listeners I know took the words "I think it would be better to put him over there," to refer to Sir John Reith. Actually they referred to a less illustrious, but equally mysterious figure, who has just recently been proving something of an embarrassment to the inmates of Broadcasting House.

The man was first seen some months ago, wandering around the corridors and humming to himself. The staff, however, were too well-bred to interrogate him until six weeks later, when he interrupted a gardening talk by shouting, "A garden is a lovesome thing, John Watt."

When questioned, the man gave his name as Joe Widgett and claimed that he was a fairy bricklayer with premises in Dancery Lane. Asked his business, he replied that he had come to lay the Foundations of Music.

While a bed was being made ready for him, Widgett was heard to say to an announcer, "Every time I lay a brick, it breaks into a million tiny pieces."

"And then what does it become?" asked the announcer, tears trembling on his long lashes.

"It becomes a darn nuisance after a time," replied Widgett, and the next moment he had disappeared, running hoppity-hop along the corridor in pursuit of one of the Aunts from the Children's Hour.

No steps have yet been taken to remove Widgett from Broadcasting House. He is now a familar figure to staff and artists alike, and has himself taken an impromptu part in many broadcasts. The mysterious voice that was heard in last Sunday's programme, exhorting a lady who was giving a harp solo to "go to town" is generally believed to have been Widgett's; while his brilliant and unrehearsed mouth-organ accompaniment to Saturday's news summary will live long in the memories of all who heard it.

This is how B.B.C. officials, the great big spoil-sports, explained the "Oi" incident:—

*"We regret that owing to a technical error a studio was faded up earlier than intended, with the result that for a few minutes listeners heard some private conversation."*

*Another B.B.C. official added that the "private conversation" was between some people standing in a studio unaware that the microphone had been switched on in error.*

*They were not standing in the correct positions for broadcasting and the microphone distorted the noise of their movements. There had been no intruders, no scuffle and no horseplay.*

There's a sign of the times for you . . . "no intruders, no scuffle and no horseplay." Why, in my young days at the B.B.C. when I was giving a series of talks on the Binomial Theorem in the Children's Hour, we were only too pleased to welcome intruders; scuffles in corners were a common occurrence, and as for horseplay, the Aunt who hadn't let her back hair down by tea-time was considered a dull dog indeed. I don't think any of us who were together in those good old roistering days will forget that midnight feast in Studio Two, when we got to the stage of drinking invalid port out of one of Brian Michie's sandals, before the police arrived and with mock solemnity frog-marched the whole lot of us to Marlborough Street.

Ah, those were the days, but now they are gone forever. Dammit, sir, you can't carry on like that when there are Arabs listening.

## SAYINGS

"To decry films is to take an ostrich attitude."—*Speaker at the conference of the Incorporated Association of Headmasters.*

"Shucks, if I hadn't have talked so much with you, I'd have gotten through with my ice cream."—*Shirley Temple to Walter Wyndham.*

"Life is such a jumble. I want to settle down."—*Judy Garland.*

"Many actors never grow up and remain hopelessly infantile in their emotional reactions."—*The Director of Los Angeles Institute of Public Relations.*

"Japan's relations with foreign powers are growing in cordiality."—*The Emperor of Japan.*

"If she doesn't stop bothering me, I'll cease paying her alimony."—*Stan Laurel.*

"You may be thinking of me with loathing."—*Collie Knox.*

"Children must be taught that a cinema star is not the best authority on morals."—*Miss F. McCabe.*

"I have got a face like an elephant's behind."—*Charles Laughton.*

**"Aw, c'mon Marlene, sock him."**

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# TELEVISION TANGLE

## *by*

## *George Audit*

THE English have a reputation for muddling through. Well, how would you propose to muddle through this mess?

Television is costing the B.B.C. something over £200,000 a year. That only allows for two hours transmitting a day and fees that are mere tokens. You have to be *some* celebrity to get more than a guinea for a show.

There are only about 1,300 receivers in the country. A receiver costs about £60. The Radio Manufacturers' Association say they can't bring down the price until they sell more sets, and they can't sell more sets until the B.B.C. provide a programme service of three or four hours a night. And what with the new short-wave service in Spanish and Arabic and an expanding Empire service, the B.B.C. simply cannot find any more money from its existing revenue without seriously damaging home programmes. Already home economy is encouraging mediocrity in variety, music and features.

Why has the experimental television service failed to create a viewing public? The price of £60 knocked 75% of the population out of the market to begin with. Secondly, despite the P.M.G.'s statement at the opening of the E.M.I. transmissions that there would be no fundamental changes for two years or more, the public has the impression that the present television system will sooner or later be replaced by something better. And as the E.M.I. contract will run on until at least the end of this year the prospects for receiver sales during 1938 are decidedly foggy. Thirdly, there is no amateur constructing public associated with television as there was with radio in its early days. Between 1922 and 1927 there were hundreds of thousands of amateurs making sets for themselves and their friends because they could turn out an instrument as good as any manufacturer's, and it was not until we had the superhet and the tuning up of sets by expensive mechanical means that the amateur found himself at a disadvantage. Any similar activity in the television field is impossible because vital components are not generally available and the whole subject is extraordinarily difficult technically.

**An E.M.I. Camera outside Alexandra Palace**

Into this confusion Scophony have dropped a bombshell. At the last company meeting Oscar Deutsch announced that Scophony had now an entirely new system of transmission and reception. The system would project satisfactorily on to a 22 foot screen and home receivers were to be put on the market shortly by E. K. Cole (Verralls of Ekco is a Director of Scophony) for a price of about £15 or so.

Mr. F. Okolicsanyi, of the Scophony laboratories, has written an article in the *Wireless Engineer* entitled "Wave-Slot, an Optical Television System," which is the new Scophony system. It is significant that I tried to get several qualified B.B.C. engineers to interpret this article to me, but none of them was able to get the hang of it, as it presupposes a knowledge of advanced optics, and it was only by luck that I found a private engineer who could oblige. The Wave-Slot system uses supersonic waves as a new method of scanning. There is no expensive cathode ray tube. Acoustic waves are made visible in a liquid for which purpose two or more supersonic cells are used in various arrangements. Many advantages are claimed for this over cathode tube methods. It has automatic synchronisation of transmission and reception. The apparatus is simple, safe and easy to reproduce. The image is brilliant and capable of extensive projection. It may well be that Scophony have at last evolved a medium to rival the film.

Meanwhile other companies are trying to find a way of projecting a fair picture from the cathode tube. It is nearly a year since we pointed out here that the 10-inch by 8-inch screen in present use must be enlarged quite a lot before images will take on any appearance of reality and the general public will be attracted. At present the size of the cathode ray tube sets a limit to the size of the picture. It produces a picture on its base in fluorescent light which is so low in intensity that it cannot be amplified by optical means.

How will television develop? Analogies with radio and film are dangerous for this reason. Film, the indirect transmission of *pictures*, was a new experience and capable of universal application. Radio, the direct transmission of *sound*, was likewise new and easy to connect to the public. But the only new feature in television is the *direct* transmission of pictures. In hard times, with little financial backing and a complicated mechanism, television cannot expect to compete seriously with such mature and established media as broadcasting, the cinema and the press.

Radio developed in the home because it was cheap to connect, conveniently small in bulk, and because sound is purer in a small room than in a large hall. The film developed in halls for the very opposite reasons. If the industry can make a televisor for under £15 that gives a clear, large picture without a separate screen it may well replace ordinary radio in many a home. This tendency would be enormously accelerated if the B.B.C. would simultaneously televise some of their ordinary radio programmes. But if it follows this direction its technique will have little in common with that of the cinema. Any radio producer knows that a successful broadcast item will often appear ridiculous when seen in a film; which is the reason why politicians prefer to make their election appeals on the air. In the home, television might replace radio for almost every item.

On the other hand, there are definite prospects for public television. Deutsch of Scophony is talking of installing television projectors in all his Odeon cinemas. He would put on to his screens opera from Covent Garden, ballet, sports views and shots of places in the news. Similar developments are under way in Russia and Germany. Three-dimensional images have already been obtained experimentally but these could only be reproduced in a big hall and in darkness. But whatever form it takes, television in public halls must have quite a different technique from anything intended for home consumption.

My own impression is that television has no future as a separate and distinct medium in spite of the B.B.C.'s efforts to segregate it. It will be absorbed by the cinema and by broadcasting, separately, as an extension of existing mediums. Unfortunately, there are many obstacles in its way. The upper strata at the B.B.C. are on the whole uncertain in their policy towards television. The film industry is suspicious because television has been made a state monopoly under the control of the B.B.C. The radio industry is suspicious because they fear that Scophony are cornering the market. Still, if you go on sitting on the future too long it sometimes has a way of tumbling you over.

# *It pays to use*

# CINÉ-KODAK FILM

EXPOSURES cannot always be 100% accurate, but even where quite serious exposure errors are made, the finished films will not tell the tale if Ciné-Kodak Reversal Films (16 mm. and Eight) are used for black-and-white pictures.

In the course of processing by the reversal method (the cost of which, naturally, is included in the price of these films) *exposure mistakes are automatically compensated for* by means of a photo-electric control device, which is exclusive to the treatment of Ciné-Kodak film. Thus, even with considerable errors of exposure in either direction, you can be sure of pictures rich in tone and detail, and of a constant brightness on the screen.

Look at the accompanying illustrations. They are enlargements from two rolls of Ciné-Kodak Pan. Film, both of them over-exposed from *f*5.6 to *f*1.9, and under-exposed from *f*11 to *f*16—the correct stop being *f*8. The left strip shows you how you are "punished" for your errors by straight processing; the right strip shows how the Reversal Process "lets you off," giving you positives of an almost constant density whatever the vagaries of your exposures.

Another big advantage of Ciné-Kodak Reversal Films is their almost complete absence of graininess when projected. In the course of processing, the negative image, consisting of the larger grains, is bleached out, leaving only the minute unexposed grains to form the positive that you see on the screen. *This applies with equal force to the duplicates which by the same reversal process can be made from the original positive.*

## CINÉ-KODAK FILMS (BLACK and WHITE)

**CINÉ-KODAK PANCHROMATIC FILM (16 mm.)** *The standard film for outdoor cinematography.*

**CINÉ-KODAK SUPER SENSITIVE PANCHROMATIC FILM (16 mm.).** *Its high speed makes it indispensable for artificial light work, and for work in weak daylight.*

**CINÉ-KODAK 'EIGHT' PANCHROMATIC FILM.** *A superfine-grain film, for the Ciné-Kodak Eight.*

**CINÉ-KODAK PANCHROMATIC SOUND RECORDING FILM (16 mm.).** *Perforated on one side only.*

ALL THE ABOVE ARE REVERSAL FILMS, SOLD AT PRICES WHICH INCLUDE PROCESSING AND RETURN POSTAGE.

★

*For full particulars, write to Mr. W. F. Taylor, Dept.* 57,

**KODAK LIMITED · KODAK HOUSE · KINGSWAY · LONDON · W.C.2**

# TECHNICAL TIT-BITS

Bell & Howell are now producing four new standard models of their sound-on-film 16 mm. projectors, one Model 120, two Model 138s, and one Model 130. All embody many new features lending greater flexibility.

In new 750-watt Filmosound 120-G, there is an electric rewind, and for the teacher who wishes to emphasise and review, there is a still-picture clutch and a reverse gear. The clutch and reverse are useful for editing purposes. The machine has also two speeds, sound and silent. The take-up mechanism is designed to require no changing of belts to run reels of various sizes. This new model is also available with a special amplifier to operate on 25 to 60-cycle alternating current.

To the new Model 138-F have been added a reverse gear and a still-picture clutch.

The Filmosound 138-J is a two-case job, with its projector fully enclosed in a "blimp" case. The second case contains a twelve-inch speaker. The projector provides both clutch and reverse, and may be used for silent as well as sound films. This two-case Filmosound is particularly suitable wherever audience and projector occupy the same room. Special models of both the one-case and two-case 128s are available, operating on 25-cycle current and on 32-volt current.

The newest of the improved Filmosounds is the 130-D, the powerful 1,000-watt Auditorium model. A completely re-designed amplifier is the outstanding feature. With twin speakers the output is as high as 50 watts, but when only one speaker is used, a switch on the amplifier limits the maximum output to 30 watts, so that the single speaker cannot be overloaded. A new microphone input circuit permits the use of a crystal mike in the microphone jack without external matching transformers, and without interfering with the sound from the projected film.

The Filmosound 130-D is available in four combinations, one or two projectors with amplifier, and one or two speakers. When two projectors are used, there is no interruption in long programmes, for as one machine is switched off at the end of a reel, the other is automatically started. Twin speakers mean not only improved sound distribution in large auditoriums, but they also provide a system capable of handling the unusually high output of the new amplifier.

In addition, Bell & Howell have new splicing, rewinding and viewing equipment for 8 mm. film, and also a new film cement which can be used for both safety and standard film. This cement does not dissolve the dye in Kodachrome.

* * *

Travelling film units are confronted with the problem of cine lenses, since the projection throws differ up to anything from thirty to seventy feet, often two or more screens have to be carried, in which case it is necessary to carry numerous cine lenses to suit the various conditions. This is an expensive proposition, each lens costing around £10, or to hire about 10*s*. per week each.

But there is on the market a "Zoom" type lens which operates between 80 mm. and 130 mm. and by merely rotating the lens turret, the picture can be made to grow in size, and keep in focus during its travel, from a picture measuring about 4 ft. to 12 or 14 ft. according to the throw. This means that irrespective of the projection throw, the size of the picture is always the same. Full particulars and price (which is equivalent to the price of three single lenses) will be forwarded by *W.F.N.* on receipt of a stamped addressed envelope.

* * *

Finding a really lightweight converter for touring purposes has provided quite a problem for some time. Rotary converters are necessary for converting direct current into alternating current for the purpose of driving amplifiers and sound film projectors. They vary in weight according to their output in ampères so that a machine with an output of, for instance, seven ampères, weighs as a rule something like 2 cwt. and more, and represents as cumbersome an article as one would wish to handle.

I have called in various manufacturers from time to time and stressed the necessity of marketing a sensible machine for the purpose, but I am sorry to say nothing really effective has been done. Weight in itself is rather an essential factor when one considers the efficiency of such a machine; the more iron and copper used, the better the performance.

However, I think I have struck the best proposition to date—a converter manufactured by the Kandem Motor Co. Ltd. of Fulham, London. The converter made to my specification weighs slightly more than $1\frac{1}{4}$ cwt., works on an input voltage of 200 to 250 volts direct current with an output of $7\frac{1}{2}$ amps. A.C. It is of the ball-bearing protected type, fitted with starting gear and A.C. volt meter, etc., and is priced at £21. 17*s*. 0*d*., representing, I believe, the cheapest on the market, yet equally comparable with other makes. Prices vary according to the size, and no doubt quotations would be given for your special requirements.

* * *

What is background noise?

It refers of course to the hiss noise heard in the background of sound films. Actually, background noise should be split for examination purposes, because there is (*a*) surface noise, and (*b*) grain noise, and the two should not be confused. Usually one finds that surface noise is predominant on variable width recordings, whilst grain noise is more apparent on variable density. The area of grain clusters can be calculated, and is a matter of much research by the leading manufacturers of film stock, because what happens is that the microscopic qualities of the emulsion and of the film base become audible as the higher frequency losses and as background noise.

The inhomogenites of surfaces, emulsion and film base noises are usually collectively termed "surface" noises, which are quite distinct from others. One will gather from this how the noise level is multiplied through the present day system of dubbing and re-recording, etc.

* * *

Pity the poor cinema operator. Up in his concrete enclosure he stands all day, living in the shadows from the glare of the arc lamps, breathing in their carbon fumes which are infused with the stick of nitrate film, listening to the unending clatter of his machine.

But not so to him, for all those conditions are to him, quite friendly. He would be nothing without them, ambling gently along through life, hoping for the best, expecting something to turn up sometime—but just what, he does not know. It is said—once an operator, always an operator, and operators never die—they only fade away.

Then all of a sudden the sound fails, dumb, mouths open wider in their endeavour to express themselves from the now silent screen, warning lights flash, the manager phones, an attendant dashes in—all with the same cry "the sound has failed!"

Somewhere in those amplifiers a valve has failed, or is it a condenser, a transformer, a choke or resistance? Perhaps a soldered connexion in one of the hundreds of wires has parted, maybe the trouble is in the loudspeakers, or one of a thousand probabilities. Meanwhile, whilst a service engineer dashes nearer in his car, the audience is getting impatient, they are clapping and now stamping, some are demanding their money back already. The scrumptious surroundings and thickly carpeted floor, the grand organ and the dress shirted managers, mean nothing now: all depends upon the operator, and this means one thing to him . . . the sack, for he is in the most precarious occupation there is, thousands of eyes watch his work all the time, he cannot rub out his mistake or troubles with a piece of rubber, it has been seen at once. And so often with the passing of a few hours he tramps his round again.


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# FILM GUIDE

## *Shorts*

**Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves** (Puppets in Gaspar-colour).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Slatinay and George Pal.

| | |
|---|---|
| ASTLEY: Kinema | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| BARNARD CASTLE: Scala | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| BOWNESS: Hippodrome | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| BREDBURY: The Palace | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| BURNTISLAND: Cinema | Feb. 4, 3 days |
| DALTON BROOK: Palace | Feb. 9, 1 day |
| HINDERWELL: Cinema | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| INGLETON: Kinema | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| KNOTTINGLEY: Palace | Feb. 14, 3 days |
| LITHERLAND: Coliseum | Feb. 4, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Garrick | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| LLANGOLLEN: Dorothy | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| LONGRIDGE: Palace | Feb. 4, 3 days |
| PELAW: Grand | Feb. 21, 3 days |
| POYNTON: Cinema | Feb. 28, 3 days |
| SALCOMBE: Cinema | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| STOKESLEY: Lyric | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| WAKEFIELD: Palace | Feb. 21, 3 days |

**Coal Face** (Poetic treatment of coal mining).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit.
*SOUND PRODUCTION:* Alberto Cavalcanti.

| | |
|---|---|
| ARMTHORPE: Scala | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| WHALLEY: Co-op | Feb. 7, 3 days |

**Colourful Cairo** (Travelogue).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.

| | |
|---|---|
| CEFN: People's | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| HETTON: Imperial | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| NEWTON STEWART: Picture House | Feb. 7, 2 days |
| WALTON-ON-THAMES: Capitol | Feb. 26, 1 day |
| WESTERHOPE: Picture House | Feb. 17, 3 days |

**Cover to Cover** (Documentary of book production).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films.
*DIRECTION:* Alexander Shaw.

| | |
|---|---|
| ABERDEEN: Topical News Theatre | Feb. 21, 6 days |
| ASPATRIA: Palace | Feb. 21, 3 days |
| BIRMINGHAM: Grand, Handsworth | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| BIRSTALL: Low Lane | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| BLACKHALL ROCK: Super | Feb. 13, 1 day |
| BUCKLEY: Palace | Feb. 21, 3 days |
| CAERGWRLE: Derby | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| EGREMONT: Castle | Feb. 7, 2 days |
| ELLESMERE: Town Hall | Feb. 28, 3 days |
| HAYDOCK: Picturedrome | Feb. 11, 2 days |
| HORDEN: Picture House | Feb. 13, 1 day |
| NORTH SEATON: Hippodrome | Feb. 28, 3 days |
| NORTON: Cinema | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| RENTON: Roxy | Feb. 9, 3 days |
| SOUTHPORT: Queens | Feb. 7, 3 days |
| STOKESLEY: Lyric | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| WEXFORD: Palace | Feb. 7, 3 days |
| WHALLEY: Co-op | Feb. 7, 3 days |

**Hollywood To-day** (Behind the scenes in Film City).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Rupert Grayson

| | |
|---|---|
| BRADFORD: Victoria Pal, Girlington | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| HECKMONDWIKE: Palace | Feb. 7, 3 days |
| LONDON: News Theatre, Waterloo | Feb. 3, 3 days |

**Insect Oddities** (A nature study).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Cedric Mallabey

| | |
|---|---|
| HEREFORD: Odeon | Feb. 27, 4 days |
| LONDON: Monseigneur, Charing X | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| Tatler, Charing Cross Rd. | Feb. 14, 7 days |
| SOUTHAMPTON: Cinenews | Feb. 6, 4 days |

**Islands of the Bounty** (Islands associated with the famous mutiny).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.

| | |
|---|---|
| ALNWICK: Corn Exchange | Feb. 7, 3 days |
| ASTLEY: Kinema | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| BLAYDON: Plaza | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| BOOSBECK: Empire | Feb. 7, 3 days |

**EDUCATIONAL FILM PROGRAMMES**

at the Tatler Theatre, Charing Cross Road.

Saturday mornings, 12 noon to 1 o'clock.

Feb. 5th. **Emil and the Detectives.**
**Tschierva Hut.**

Feb. 12th. **The French "U."**
**Le Dernier Milliardaire.**

Saturday mornings, 11 a.m. to noon, and 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.

Feb. 19th. **Romantic India.**
**Island of Contrasts.**
**Udaipur.**
**Wings over Everest**

Feb. 26th. **Farming in Spring**
**The Tawny Owl**
**Roots**
**The Sawfly**
**O'er Hill and Dale**

| | |
|---|---|
| CHESTER-LE-STREET: Empire | Feb. 28, 3 days |
| CURRAGH: Sandes | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| DUBLIN: Pillar | Feb. 6, 4 days |
| The Princess | Feb. 27, 7 days |
| DUNMANWAY: Broadway | Feb. 13, 1-2 days |
| EGREMONT: Castle | Feb. 21, 2 days |
| HETTON: Imperial | Feb. 21, 3 days |
| HINDERWELL: Cinema | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| ILFRACOMBE: New Cinema | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| KIPPAX: Alhambra | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| KIRKCUDBRIGHT: Picture House | Feb. 25, 2 days |
| KNOTTINGLEY: Palace | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| LANGLEY PARK: Hippodrome | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| LONDON: Cinema, Bloomsbury | Feb. 28, 3 days |
| MARPLE: Regent | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| MEADOWFIELD: Kinema | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| STOCKPORT: Brinksway | Feb. 25, 3 days |
| SWALLWELL: Cosy | Feb. 3, 2 days |
| WHALLEY: Co-op | Feb. 21, 3 days |

**Men Against the Sea** (Documentary of North Sea trawling).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Vernon Sewell

| | |
|---|---|
| BUCKIE: Palace | Feb. 24, 2 days |
| HEYWOOD: Picturedrome | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| NAIRN: Palace | Feb. 17, 3 days |

**Netherlands Old and New** (Travelogue of Holland and the Island of Curacao).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Cedric Mallabey

| | |
|---|---|
| ALLOA: La Scala | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| BELLSHILL: Picture Theatre | Feb. 14, 3 days |
| CHEPSTOW: Palace | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| CINDERFORD: Picture House | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| FALKIRK: Pavilion | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| HEREFORD: Odeon | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| KIRKCALDY: Rialto | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| LONDON: Monseigneur, Charing X | Feb. 21, 3 days |
| Monseigneur, Strand | Feb. 21, 3 days |
| Sphere, Tott. Court Road | Feb. 21, 3 days |
| Tatler, Charing Cross X | Feb. 7, 7 days |
| MANCHESTER: Scala, Withington | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| SALTAIRE: Picture House | Feb. 3, 3 days |

**Night Mail** (Documentary of the northward trip of the postal special).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Basil Wright, Harry Watt

| | |
|---|---|
| ATHLONE: Savoy | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| BURNTISLAND: Cinema | Feb. 4, 2 days |
| BIRMINGHAM: Grand, Handsworth | Feb. 21, 3 days |
| KEGWORTH: Court | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| MARPLE: Regent | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| PENISTONE: Town Hall | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| SILVERTOWN: Albert Hall | Feb. 7, 3 days |
| STONE: Picture House | Feb. 14, 3 days |
| WHITTLE-LE-WOODS: Palace | Feb. 3, 3 days |

**Overland Express** (German travelogue).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* C. E. Hodges Productions

| | |
|---|---|
| HEREFORD: Odeon | Feb. 6, 4 days |
| MANCHESTER: Scala, Withington | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| SCARBOROUGH: Londsborough | Feb. 13, 1 day |

**People in the Parks.**
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Paul Burnford
Donald Alexander

| | |
|---|---|
| KNUTSFORD: Picture House | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| MANCHESTER: Grove, Hazelgrove | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| NORTH SEATON: Hippodrome | Feb. 28, 3 days |
| SALCOMBE: Cinema | Feb. 21, 3 days |
| SEATON DELAVAL: Queens | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| SHEFFIELD: Manor | Feb. 17, 3 days |

**Plane Sailing** (The ins and outs of gliding).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* Bosworth Goldman

| | |
|---|---|
| BOURNEMOUTH: Premier | Feb. 21, 6 days |
| DRIFFIELD: Majestic | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| HOWDEN: Majestic | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| LONDON: Town Hall, Battersea | Feb. 3, 1 day |
| PICKERING: Majestic | Feb. 7, 3 days |
| POCKLINGTON: Majestic | Feb. 14, 3 days |
| STOCKPORT: Don | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| SUTTON COALFIELD: Odeon | Feb. 7, 6 days |


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# Shorts (*Contd.*)

**Secrets of the Stars** (Spotlight on British stages and studios).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Argyle British Productions Ltd.

| | |
|---|---|
| ALLOA: La Scala | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| BARNSLEY: Empire | Feb. 14, 6 days |
| BRADFORD: Victoria Pal, Girlington | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| BOOTLE: Broadway | Feb. 21, 3 days |
| HALIFAX: Picture House | Feb. 7, 6 days |
| HECKMONDWIKE: Palace | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| LONDON: Cinema, Hokton | Feb. 7, 7 days |
| Eros News, Piccadilly | Feb. 14, 3 days |
| News Theatre, Victoria | Feb. 7, 3 days |
| News Theatre, Waterloo | Feb. 21, 3 days |
| NEWTOWN: Regent | Feb. 28, 3 days |
| RADCLIFFE: Odeon | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| RAVENSTHORPE: Pavilion | Feb. 21, 3 days |
| RUNCORN: Empress | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| SCARBOROUGH: Capital | Feb. 6, 4 days |
| SOUTHPORT: Palace | Feb. 13, 7 days |
| WAKEFIELD: Empire | Feb. 14, 6 days |
| WARRINGTON: Odeon | Feb. 14, 6 days |
| YORK: St. Georges | Feb. 7, 6 days |

**Six-Thirty Collection** (Documentary of the West End sorting office).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit
*DIRECTION:* Edgar Anstey, Harry Watt

| | |
|---|---|
| SOUTHPORT: Queens | Feb. 28, 3 days |
| WAKEFIELD: Palace | Feb. 24, 3 days |

**Snow Water** (Water power in the Swiss mountains).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*DIRECTION:* H. Dreyer

| | |
|---|---|
| ILKLEY: Grove | Feb. 21, 6 days |
| PRESTON: Rialto | Feb. 9, 4 days |

**Southward Ho!** (A journey across Franz-Josef glacier).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* C. E. Hodges

| | |
|---|---|
| BIRKENHEAD: Super | Feb. 21, 6 days |
| BOLTON: Odeon | Feb. 7, 6 days |
| CIRENCESTER: Picture House | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| HAMILTON: La Scala | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Gaumont Pal, Anfield | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| Rivoli | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Rd. | Feb. 28, 7 days |
| SALTAIRE: Picture House | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| SOUTHEND: Kursaal | Feb. 28, 3 days |
| STAFFORD: Odeon | Feb. 7, 6 days |
| WEYMOUTH: Bellvue | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| WISHAW: Cinema | Feb. 24, 3 days |

**Sunny Tessin** (Survey of the Canton Tessin, Southern Switzerland).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph

| | |
|---|---|
| BIRMINGHAM: West End | Feb. 24, 7 days |
| GUERNSEY: Lyric | Feb. 14, 6 days |
| HANLEY: Regent | Feb. 14, 6 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Casino | Feb. 7, 6 days |
| MIDDLESBROUGH: Gaumont Palace | Feb. 14, 6 days |
| NEW BRIGHTON: Trocadero | Feb. 28, 6 days |
| NORTH SHIELDS: Princes | Feb. 14, 6 days |
| PETERBOROUGH: Broadway | Feb. 7, 6 days |
| SOUTHAMPTON: Cinenews | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| SOUTHPORT: Palladium | Feb. 14, 6 days |
| WEST HARTLEPOOL: Picture House | Feb. 21, 6 days |

**This Other Eden** (A trip down the river Eden, in Westmorland).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Pennine Films Ltd.

| | |
|---|---|
| BRADFORD: Victoria Pal, Girlington | Feb. 21, 3 days |
| LONDON: Monseigneur, Strand | Feb. 28, 3 days |
| World News, Praed St. | Feb. 14, 3 days |
| NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: News Theatre | Feb. 28, 6 days |
| ST. LEONARDS: Kinema | Feb. 28, 6 days |
| SOUTHEND: Kursaal | Feb. 14, 3 days |
| SOUTHPORT: Palace | Feb. 27, 7 days |

**To-day We Live** (The depressed areas of Wales).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* Ralph Bond and R. I. Grierson

| | |
|---|---|
| BELFAST: Apollo | Feb. 9, 1 day |
| MEADOWFIELD: Kinema | Feb. 10, 3 days |

**Town and Gown** (Buildings, scenery and life of Oxford and Cambridge).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Peter Collin

| | |
|---|---|
| DARLINGTON: Alhambra | Feb. 28, 3 days |
| EGREMONT: Gaumont Palace | Feb. 28, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Casino | Feb. 28, 3 days |
| MORECAMBE: Tower | Feb. 20, 4 days |
| PRESTON: New Victoria | Feb. 1, 5 days |
| STROUD: Gaumont Palace | Feb. 24, 3 days |

**Way to the Sea** (Documentary of the roads and railways from London to the coast).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films
*DIRECTION:* J. B. Holmes

| | |
|---|---|
| AIRDALE: Empire | Feb. 14, 3 days |
| BAKEWELL: Picture House | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| BARNSLEY: Empire | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| BREDBURY: Palace | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| KNUTSFORD: Picture House | Feb. 17, 3 days |
| LONDON: World News, Praed St. | Feb. 7, 3 days |
| LONGRIDGE: Palace | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| MARKET HARBOROUGH: Oriental | Feb. 7, 3 days |
| NEWPORT, I.O.W.: Odeon | Feb. 28, 6 days |
| NEWTON HEATH: Pavilion | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| POYNTON: Cinema | Feb. 28, 3 days |
| SHEFFIELD: Greystone | Feb. 24, 3 days |

**Wheel and Woe** (The evolution of the motor-car).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph
*PRODUCTION:* Liberty
*DIRECTION:* W. G. Duncalf

| | |
|---|---|
| ARBROATH: Olympia | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| BARNSLEY: Empire | Feb. 21, 6 days |
| CREWE: Odeon | Feb. 14, 6 days |
| DARLINGTON: Alhambra | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| DUNOON: Picture House | Feb. 14, 3 days |
| EDINBURGH: Monseigneur | Feb. 7, 3 days |
| GLASGOW: Orient | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| GOOL: Cinema Palace | Feb. 21, 3 days |
| HULL: Playhouse | Feb. 21, 3 days |
| ILKLEY: Grove | Feb. 7, 6 days |
| LONDON: News Theatre, Waterloo | Feb. 24, 3 days |
| World News, Praed Street | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| MANCHESTER: Corona, West Gorton | Feb. 14, 3 days |
| MOTHERWELL: Pavilion | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| PAISLEY: Alex | Feb. 10, 3 days |
| SOWERBY BRIDGE: Electric | Feb. 3, 3 days |
| WARRINGTON: Odeon | Feb. 7, 6 days |
| WISHAW: Cinema | Feb. 3, 3 days |

# Foreign Films

**Der Ammenkoenig** (German).
*DIRECTION:* Hans Steinhoff
*DISTRIBUTION:* Tobis

| | |
|---|---|
| OXFORD: Scala | Feb. 7, 6 days |

**La Belle Equipe** (French).
*DIRECTION:* Julien Duvivier
*STARRING:* Jean Gabin, Charles Vanel, Marcel Geniat

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Berkeley | Feb. 1, indefinitely |

**Un Carnet de Bal** (Winner of the Mussolini Cup—French).
*DIRECTION:* Julien Duvivier
*STARRING:* Françoise Rosay, Harry Baur, Pierre Blanchar, Fernandel, Raimu, Robert Lynen

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Studio One | Feb. 1, indefinitely |

**Chapaiev** (Russian).
*PRODUCTION:* Leningrad Film Factory
*DIRECTION:* S. and G. Vassiliev

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Forum | Feb. 6, indefinitely |

**Ernte** (Austrian).
*DIRECTION:* Geza von Bolvary
*STARRING:* Paula Wessely

| | |
|---|---|
| OXFORD: Scala | Feb. 21, 6 days |

**La Grande Illusion** (French).
*PRODUCTION:* Réalisation d'Art Cinématographique
*DIRECTION:* Jean Renoir
*STARRING:* Erich von Stroheim, Jean Gabin, Dita Parlo

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Academy | Feb. 1, indefinitely |

**Gribouille** (French).
*PRODUCTION:* Laeur & Co., Paris
*DIRECTION:* Marc Allégret
*STARRING:* Raimu, Michèle Morgan

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Curzon | Feb. 1, indefinitely |

**Hortobagy** (Hungarian).
*DIRECTION:* Georg Hollering

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Academy | Following *La Grande Illusion* |

**La Kermesse Héroïque** (French).
*DIRECTION:* Jaques Feyder
*STARRING:* Françoise Rosay, Jean Murat

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Forum | Feb. 1, 5 days |
| OXFORD: Scala | Feb. 14, 6 days |

**La Mort du Cygne** (French).
*PRODUCTION:* Les Films Osso
*DIRECTION:* Jean Benoit-Levy
*STARRING:* Jean Perier, Mady Berry, The Corps de Ballet from the Paris Opera House

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Curzon | Following *Gribouille* |

**The Oyster Princess** (German).
*PRODUCTION:* Algassa Films, Berlin
*DIRECTION:* E. W. Emo
*STARRING:* Gusti Wolf, Theo Lingen

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Berkeley | Following *La Belle Equipe* |

**Schloss in Flandern** (German).
*DIRECTION:* Geza von Bolvary
*DISTRIBUTION:* Tobis

| | |
|---|---|
| OXFORD: Scala | Feb. 28, 6 days |


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# FILM SOCIETIES AND CLUBS

**THE ROYAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SOCIETY** (Kinematograph Section): Hon. Secretary, R. Howard Cricks, F.R.P.S., 35 Russell Square, W.C.1.

The Kinematograph Section has arranged for February a meeting of interest to workers in all branches of photography and kinematography. On Friday the 25th, Mr. A. E. Amor, F.R.P.S., is to give a paper on the manufacture of motion-picture film stock; Mr. Amor is a prominent member of the technical staff at the Kodak works at Harrow, and his information will therefore be first-hand and comprehensive.

The meeting opens as usual at 7 p.m. with the projection of sub-standard films. Non-members may obtain admission by invitation of a member, or by ticket obtainable from the Joint Secretaries.

The list of distinctions conferred by the Royal on its promiment members at the recent elections includes a number of names well known in film circles. Mr. Amor himself is among the newly-elected Fellows, while prominent among the Associates are H. M. Bond, Alfred Brown, Harold Chevalier, Leslie Rowson and J. H. D. Ridley.

**EDINBURGH FILM GUILD:** Hon. Secretary, Douglas A. Donald, Esq., 16 Great King Street, Edinburgh, 3.

In an endeavour to encourage substandard cinematography along constructive lines, the Guild, in co-operation with the Educational Film Association of Scotland, the Waverley Amateur Cine Society of Edinburgh, the Scottish Churches Film Guild and the Edinburgh Photographic Society, is organising an Amateur Film Festival to be held next November when prizes will be offered for films in four classes:

(*a*) A film of Edinburgh.
(*b*) Documentary, including industrial, civic and social services, publicity, travel, information and general interest.
(*c*) A colour film.
(*d*) Films for Church purposes including welfare, missionary or Biblical subjects.

While the entries in the classes (*b*), (*c*), and (*d*) are open only to residents in the Lothians, Peeblesshire and Edinburgh the film of Edinburgh is open to anyone and this Festival should provide a fine opportunity for amateurs all over the country, who may be visiting Edinburgh this summer, to turn their cameras on the town and see their films accorded the dignity of public showing in the Edinburgh Film Festival, with a chance of winning a trophy and prize.

**MANCHESTER AND SALFORD FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, R. Cordwell, Esq., 13 Milwain Drive, Heaton Chapel, Stockport.

On December 19th the following films were shown to the Society: *Den Haag*, *La Belle au Bois Dormant*, *Modern Orphans of the Storm*, and *We from Kronstadt*. A retiring collection on behalf of the National Joint Council for Spanish Relief realised £18 10*s*. On January 18th Mr. Stuart Legg spoke on "The Future of British Films", at a meeting arranged jointly with the Manchester and District Film Institute Society. On January 20th, at the Rivoli Cinema, the programme included *Children at School*, *Soap Bubbles* and *Musik im Blut*.

On February 20th the feature will be *La Kermesse Héroïque*. Other shows will take place on March 20th and April 10th.

**WEST ESSEX FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, L. G. Watson, Esq., 10 Meadway, Buckhurst Hill. Studio: 41a Kempton Road, East Ham, E.6.

At recent technical meetings addresses have been given on the subjects of Set Construction and Make-up.

*Power Without Glory*, a film made by the Chairman, Mr. A. L. Watson, was projected at a recent meeting, and further progress has been made in the shooting of Mr. S. Reed's film, *Pot of Basil*.

Whilst membership must necessarily be limited, there are one or two vacancies in the Society. Applications should be addressed to the Secretary.

**THE GUILD OF CATHOLIC TEACHERS' FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, Margaret M. Kerr, M.A., 53 Drumby Crescent, Clarkston, Glasgow.

At the last meeting on December 9th, the discussion on "Censorship" was continued, and plans are gradually taking form for the classification of general films, according to their suitability for children. It is intended that, with this classification, teachers of the Guild will be in a position to guide children and advise their parents in the matter of choosing programmes which will have a good influence on the minds of the young. The need for such selection is very evident when one views the number of children who visit the cinema, and the titles of some of the programmes which are presented.

At a meeting held on January 20th three Kodachrome films were shown in addition to the usual programme. These depict native life and missionary work in Africa, and have come direct to the Society from Uganda, where they were taken by a friend.

**AVANTE-GARDE LECTURES**

Among the February lectures at the Reimann School and Studios, 4–10 Regency Street, London, S.W.1., is "Film-Making Single-handed", by Alex Strasser, F.R.P.S., to be given at 8 p.m. on February 11th.

Mr. Strasser, expert in documentary film-making and author of several film books, will discuss the work of the "avant-garde", and the possibilities of amateur film-work. Several films will be shown during the lecture. Admission 1*s*. 6*d*. (students 1*s*.).

* * *

On January 30th Jean Langlois, founder and organiser of the Cinémathèque Française, lectured at the Forum Cinema on the development of the film. The lecture was in French, with an English summary given at intervals.

Mr. Langlois maintained that contemporary cinematic valuation and criticism is distorted by social and economic atmosphere, and that the emphasis of a film shifts with the changing reactions of new audiences. Most film successes are lucky breaks. *Caligari*, shot with no great aim in view, became a classic. Only the works of Méliès, Griffith and Chaplin are faultless.

The talk was illustrated by reels from films by The German Expressionists, Pabst, Pina Menchelli, Sjostrom, Stiller, Griffith, Méliès, Wiene, Clair, Murnau and Vigo.

**OXFORD FILM SOCIETY:** Hon. Secretary, E. F. Bowtell, Esq., 105 Victoria Road, Oxford.

The following are the details of the Society's Hilary term meetings: Sunday, February 6th, *The New Gulliver*, supported by *N. or N.W.* (Len Lye) and an early Chaplin comedy. Sunday, February 20th, the famous Greek legend *Amphitryon* and *Underground Farmers*.

## NAT. TRUST COMPETITION

The attention of the Amateurs is drawn to a change in the closing date of the National Trust Film Competition announced in the December W.F.N. The closing date is now October 1st, 1938.

For those who did not see the early announcement we are repeating the competition rules.

No two prizes in respect of films of the same property or group of properties will be awarded, and the Trust reserves to itself the copyright of any winning exhibit.

The films should run for not less than 10 minutes, and coloured films are eligible to compete.

Preference will be given to films dealing with several rather than with one property.

The films must be on 16 mm films.

The prizes will be :—

1st £20
2nd £15
3rd £5

The closing date is October 1st, 1938.

The prize-winning films will be used in connection with lectures, etc., to further the work of the National Trust, and will be titled as having won a prize in the National Trust Competition 1938 with the name of the winner.

Originals shall become the absolute property of the Trust, but the maker shall be entitled to copies of the film at cost price if he so wishes.

For further information refer to the December W.F.N. or write to : The Competition Secretary, The National Trust, 7 Buckingham Palace Gardens, London, S.W.1.


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# world FILM news

## RALPH RICHARDSON—LAURENCE OLIVIER—ALFRED HITCHCOCK

CAMERAMAN IN SPAIN — MAXIM GORKI
THE CENSOR and SYDNEY STREET — STUART LEGG
EXCLUSIVE — CONQUEST of the AIR — LESLIE PERKOFF
MY GRANDMOTHER and WALT DISNEY — E. A. HARDING
EZRA GOODMAN

MARCH 1s

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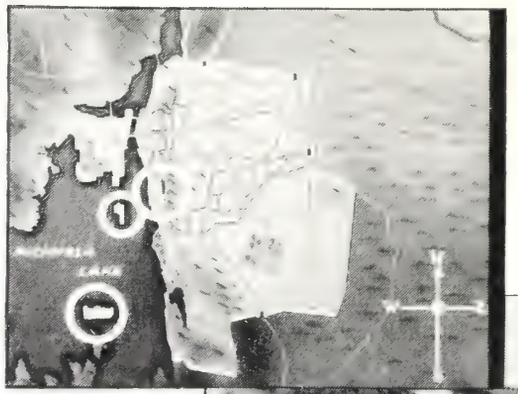

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*4. Geography*

*5. Agriculture*

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# WORLD FILM NEWS

MARCH 1938

Vol. 2 No. 12


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# The CENSOR and SYDNEY STREET

THE film-world with its play of names, sensational and unsteady in its juggling with stars, is more sober in its treatment of craftsmen. Griffith, Disney, Eisenstein, Duvivier—such names have solid foundations. Likewise the name Alfred Hitchcock, one of the few real English contributions to film technique.

Unlike too many of his colleagues, Hitchcock often rejects the Philistine insensitiveness to film problems. Thus his unequivocal recognition of the writer as the prime factor in the substance of the dramatic film, his prophecy of the future obsoleteness of the director unless his status and power expand to that of the producer, and his attitude to the question of universal appeal which he considers detrimental to film art.

He is a product of British films, yet where most British films lack individuality, he has at least specialised in a peculiar treatment and applied a measure of realism in portraying characters. And on the lack of individuality in British films he says:

"I think the shortage of personnel in this country is largely to blame. We have to consider that we're in competition with Hollywood. In the case of France this is not so marked, since only comparatively few of their talented people percolate through to Hollywood. People like Bauer remain, and, although Laughton and Donat now remain in England, their price value has gone up since their contact with Hollywood, and this puts them out of the reach of many British producers. It is because of the language question that Hollywood has been able to draw so much on British talent.

"It is all a root problem, yet I would say that English humour has got individuality, for comedy has suited the English temper. Yet nothing is really being done to develop talent here, although I have sometimes taken on untried people. There is an absence of good technicians, particularly a lack of first-class cameramen. The whole thing mystifies me, and I would be inclined to say that the young men don't take their work seriously enough. There's too much of this knocking off at six o'clock attitude. London perhaps is too distracting. In America, you see, Hollywood succeeds as a production centre where New York fails. As for places like Denham and Elstree, they are too near London."

These difficulties recognised, this should point more strongly to the need for the growth of a film movement in England, something as creative as the old German school and as individual as many of the French films of to-day. This is the rather diffused feeling which exists among a number of the younger film people. To bring this about a co-ordinated movement is necessary. Its practicability is submitted to Hitchcock.

"That, of course, is academic," he declares. "But I endorse such a movement. The interests in Wardour Street, however, are primarily concerned with the commercial aspects, therefore it would have to have finance. But there is always this drawback: the handling of star material and story. These are difficulties which are not present in the making of documentary films. I would like to make documentary films, because here you have slabs of action or movement which can be easily treated by photography and

***Alfred Hitchcock, one of the few British film directors to achieve approving recommendation in America, has in recent years specialised in crime stories for his films.***

***In an interview with Leslie Perkoff he here discusses problems of film-making, his interest in documentary and social films and his hopes for the future.***

***"If I do go to Hollywood, I'd only work for Selznick."***

cutting. But a cataclysm in any film, for example, is akin to documentary material. It begins with the camera and goes directly to the cutting-room."

If the handling of stars presents an obstacle to film-making, could not the star system itself be lessened in favour of actual story value and treatment of a film?

"The point about the star-system is that it enables you to exaggerate from a story point of view. And the stars do bring the audiences into the cinemas. A star's name is like a clarion call and brings in the time factor when, for instance, a film is shown and you want people to come and see it on definite days. A film without stars would have to wait to be appreciated."

A problem which has recently given grounds for strong comment is now introduced: The clash of idioms brought about by the irruption of film people into a strange country whose language even they sometimes have not mastered.

"I had an experience bringing this up when I was directing a film called *Murder* in English and German," Hitchcock says. "I could speak German, but I found it was a difference of idiom and not of language. You've got to live twenty years in a country before you can express its idiom."

At this juncture the paradox in Hitchcock's own work is put forward; on one hand, his feeling for and treatment of real characters, and on the other hand, the fantasy, unreality and sometimes lack of social background that accompanies the treatment.

"Failing to get a good script, I've invariably descended or ascended to using my own resources and becoming a crime reporter. I've always found it difficult to get proper themes."

Certain criminal types are dealt with in his films, but has it occurred to him to give the psychological background to these types? For instance, the social and personal conflicts that make criminals of people?

"Of course, I've studied criminal types from many aspects. I've read many books on the subject, but it is a matter of the sugar-coated pill with films. I wanted to make an anti-capital punishment film where the prison governor revolts and refuses to hang his man. It's a stirring subject. But here there would be difficulties with the censor. America can send over things of this sort, because the attitude here is that America can do what she likes with social subjects in her own country. In England this has to be left alone. When I put the Sydney Street affair in the *Man Who Knew Too Much*, the censor's objection was that it wasn't the thing to show English policemen using arms. He was very decent about the matter, though. I would like to make a film showing the balance of justice in English courts. I feel that this is a subject which has not been shown to the full."

Was he going to Hollywood, and if so did he expect to have better facilities there for expressing himself?

"I've only discussed this with David Selznick so far. The matter is still in the air. But if I do go to Hollywood, I'd only work for Selznick."

And finally there is a touch of dismay in Hitchcock's attitude to the present situation of the cinema. "Cinema as an art-form doesn't really exist," he says. "So many people have brought the theatre into it. It is no longer used in a technical sense, but as a proscenium."

The impression is given of fundamental problems having been touched on, but not resolved: The conflict between England and America on the question of talent; the obstacles in the way of a creative film movement in England; the compelling aura surrounding the star-system; the dearth of cinematic story material and the lack of freedom in dealing with important subjects; and the stereotyped treatment of films, so that they are forced into the "proscenium." Somewhere else Hitchcock has inferred that the power of universal appeal and the need to cater for this has done much to destroy film art. Tacitly, then, the uncreative elements at work in the cinema are recognised.

One is safe in submitting that the public is not solely responsible for this, since the very nature of a society that demands that film be utilised as an anodyne must be considered. Apparently the film executives and the financial powers operating behind their movements, do not realise what a powerful yet sensitive medium they control, for they have so far underestimated and failed to understand the complex structure of the public they cater for. To reverse their logic, it is not always this incoherently defined public that dictates film demands, but rather they themselves.

*The picture heading this article is from Hitchcock's new film "Young and Innocent" and Hitchcock himself appears in this scene. He is to the left of the doorway, holding a camera.*

*Above: a scene from "The Thirty-Nine Steps"*

# NEWSREEL MAN *in the* FIRING LINE

*The adventures and misadventures of Richard Butler, Pathé Cameraman in search of newsreel pictures on the Aragon front.*

I PRODUCED my papers—showing them how much money I was bringing into the country. I was allowed to pass on. I reported to the British Consulate and was advised to get out of Spain without delay as they did not consider it safe for me to attempt to take photographs.

I got to an hotel and dumped my equipment and then sat down to partake of a Spanish breakfast, which to an English appetite fell far short of what I had hoped. I had a walk round the town. Almost everyone was in some sort of military uniform—or shall we say dress, as a Sam Browne over an ordinary suit of clothes, revolver in holster and the militia cap made a well-dressed soldier of the Red Army of Spain. Flags and banners flew from every car, private and otherwise; and every car had roughly painted on the initials of the organisation to which the owner belonged—P.O.U.M., F.A.I., C.N.T., U.G.T., P.S.U., and others too numerous to recall with ease, and there appeared, of course, the sickle and hammer painted on somewhere. Everyone appeared to be in high spirits, and by the look on people's faces one could not help acquiring confidence.

That night—and on most nights, so I was told—the streets were crowded with people listening to the loud-speakers giving forth the news, propaganda, etc., mingled with the "Internationale". This sort of thing continues to about 1 a.m. the following morning.

The next day I started making enquiries how to get to the front. Some people to whom I spoke about this regarded me with interest; others thought I was crazy. After a lot of suggestions I concluded that to visit some of the organisations would be a good idea. I first of all visited the Commission of Propaganda; then the F.A.I. headquarters; and after receiving little satisfaction I approached the P.O.U.M. I could not get a start. Everyone seemed to want to shift the responsibility of giving me papers. However, I was finally given the first encouragement from the propaganda people, who were most helpful, giving me several addresses to which I should apply for permission to take photographs in Spain.

With these papers of recommendation I thought I was fairly safe to make a start, so engaged a car to go to Madrid. Everywhere the roads are in a bad state and desperately in need of repair. We had not gone far, and everything seemed to be going well, when we were halted by a road sentry, who drew his revolver and kept it pointing steadily in my direction, while I gave him all the papers I possessed to read. He mumbled something in Russian and then called up a comrade, and together they decided that I should about turn. The driver of the car tried his best to explain, but this only served to make the guards more excited; they were madly gesticulating, and waving their arms about in the air. That revolver did look pretty threatening, so late that night I arrived back in Barcelona feeling fed-up at having apparently wasted a day and about 200 pesetas.

But this first set-back only went to prove how important it was to have every paper that was procurable before starting off again.

The reason for these difficulties, I discovered later, was due to the fact that two Continental cameramen had taken pictures at the Government fronts and that films containing military information of an important character had found their way into Rebel hands.

The Commission of Propaganda now came to my aid in a whole-hearted manner, after I explained that I was out in Spain to obtain pictures of an impartial nature and to show the British public the Government as well as the other side to the question. So many Rebel pictures had been shown, I pointed out, but very few of the Government side.

Two days later more papers were obtained, and in one of the Commission of Propaganda cars I set off for the Aragon Front. But twenty miles out, owing, I inferred, to the excessive vibration of the car caused by the bad roads, an oil pipe burst and ran the engine out of oil. I waited with the car while the driver went on in another car to the next village, returning an hour later with the necessary oil and accessories for repairs.

During his absence I visited a farmhouse about one hundred yards off the road, and was given wine and bread by two old peasants who cried like children when the war was mentioned—their two sons were fighting somewhere on the Aragon Front. I thanked them in bad French and a little Spanish; however, they seemed to understand. It is dangerous to drink water out in the country, and so if you get too much of a thirst you must be able to carry your liquor well, or there will be two wars going on.

I arrived at Barbastro that night about forty miles away from the Front, and had to sleep in a small bed with the driver, the town being full up with troops on their way to the Front. Next morning I set off at eight a.m. for "the bloody hell", as some called it in the town billets. On the way the back axle snapped. I hired another car and so on to the Front, arriving in what was once a town, but now a mere heap of bricks. I reported to the Committee and officer in charge, and proceeded on foot to the Front-line trenches where spasmodic rifle and machine-gun fire was going on. No one took much notice except myself, but I soon became accustomed to it.

It was not long before I unpacked my camera, and started getting a few shots—some excellent scenes of sniping, etc. I spent the day here. The night before, I was informed, there had been an attack by the Moors, their front line being only 350 yards away. I was told in the trenches that priests encouraged and blessed the men before they went into an attack—giving them crosses to carry round their necks and promising them that should they be killed in battle they would go straight to Paradise. My informant told me that five to six hundred Moors had been shot down the night before, but I could not see any from the Government lines. So I decided to investigate, and, under the protection of a ditch, crawled out about eighty yards and got several shots of dead Moors—all around on every side I could see the countryside strewn with these corpses. I counted up to 500; then lost count. I did not see any "Spanish Rebel" corpses on this part, only Moors. Every now and then the dust would be raised by a rifle bullet, and I was glad of the cover afforded by the ditch I was crawling in. I slept that night in a place that was once a house—straw on the floor and huge holes in the roof and walls.

Next day I visited another battery behind Tardienta and took several "shots" of the troops. They all seemed cheery souls, and the camera caused quite an amount of interest. During the time I was there, an unexpected flank attack was commenced by a small body of Rebels, which was soon repulsed by the men of the battery with rifle fire. Often the Rebels broke through the line at some weak spot and got lost and endeavoured to fight their way back to their own lines. After one has seen the country, this is quite easily understood.

I TRAVELLED the following day to Septimo, miles further up the line, and reported to the Committee and officer in charge. My food supplies were limited, so I sent the driver back to get more stock. He took the best part of a day to get some tinned provisions and bread, having to go about thirty to forty miles inland for it. I slept that night in a room with about a dozen soldiers on straw, all of them in high spirits and very merry and bright. My cameras caused much interest, and everybody wanted his photograph taken. Up at dawn, I was glad to get out away from the straw, which I am sure, from my discomfort and the state of my underclothes, was lousy. I took some "shots" in Septimo all in ruins, and got permission to go to Huesca Front line, some 2,000 yards away. The driver arrived at a part of the road where sandbag barricades were to be seen all around.

Here was a good picture, so I started getting the cameras out of the case when there came a voice in good English, "Get down, you bloody fool! Get back!" The driver backed the car and I took the advice received.

I met an Englishman commanding one of the Government batteries. He explained that we were right in the front line, and where the driver had stopped the car was a spot well covered by about four or five Rebel machine-guns; fortunately no shots were fired and we proceeded with more caution. I went into the trenches with the Englishman and got some more photographs, and it was here I was amused at the following incident. Rebel trenches were only fifty yards away, and Government men and the Rebels would shout across to each other insults of every kind. As they were in Spanish I cannot repeat them, but I could use my imagination.

Going to the battery just behind the front line, which is well covered by a thickly-wooded stream, I sat down by one of the gun pits and had a chat. A couple of bullets cut off a twig and some leaves hardly a yard off, so I shifted to a safer spot in the gun pit. No photographs are allowed to be taken of the guns or the activities of the gunners. Returning to Septimo, I had some grub and came back that evening to the front line to talk with the Englishman, who gave me some photographs. I drank Spanish wine till I thought I had better get back while I could.

Next day I visited front line kitchens and the War Hospital at Tiers, a little village

(*continued on next page*)

*Government troops go into action.* (*Pathé Newsreel*)

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(*Continued from previous page*)

about five hundred yards behind the line. My companion and myself had to take cover from 'planes on several occasions. They were very active and would circle overhead menacingly and keep flying round as though to depart, but would reappear when least expected.

I got good shots of a Government attack through a rifle firing hole. They ran into a machine gun and got cut up badly; the pictures show them falling and retiring in rather bad disorder. The shortage of arms and ammunition was certainly evident. Visiting Tiers again, I took some shots of the Rebel lines through a tele lens, but had them cut out by a censor as they showed the Government position in relation to the Rebel lines. I returned to Septimo for a night and had a sing-song with the Government soldiers; they certainly could sing, a quartet putting on a Mills Brothers act to perfection.

I was off at dawn to a heavy battery position. They were giving me a position to the right of Huesca. I took two hundred feet of film going; then I moved to a new and more comfortable position and made several shots of shells bursting on Rebel positions. After a few hours I returned to Huesca Front line, and had lunch with the P.O.U.M. I got some good shots and during lunch several rifle bullets hit the top of the wall in the room—or what was once a room. It had no roof, but we were covered by a wall in front of us, and were some six feet or more out of the line of fire. Under the conditions, I didn't enjoy my lunch as well as I could have done. Nobody else took any notice, so I endeavoured to disregard the firing, but was nevertheless glad when lunch was over.

Next day I left for Siriema and discovered before I had journeyed many miles that it was necessary to buy a new tyre for the car; it was not exactly "new", but better than the one that had cut up badly on the rough roads. Arriving at Siriema, I reported at the Air Field for permission to take pictures of the British Red Cross and Air Field—the general here commands the whole of the Aragon Front—but my papers were not good enough for him and he graciously had the driver and myself put under arrest and shoved into prison. Although we did not possess firearms, we had an armed guard with us all the time. My cameras and films were all taken and things looked pretty black. I spoke all the French and Spanish I knew, but of no avail.

*War!* (*Pathé Newsreel*)

*Richard Butler*

HOWEVER, that night we were removed to a house and given a bed to sleep in. There were literally thousands of bugs; it was a most vile and filthy place. The bed was damp and I was indeed grateful to see the dull grey light of morning, after lying awake through the night.

I was still finding it difficult to get someone to understand the English language. At last I was understood in French, and was told that the police had telephoned Barcelona. This sounded better. Our guard was glad of a drink, so I let him have what he wanted—he soon became quite jolly and obliging, and I eventually managed to get to the police headquarters. Here I 'phoned Barcelona myself, and found out that papers were on their way from the Commission of Propaganda.

That night I left for Barcelona, managing after difficulty and much signing of papers to regain possession of my cameras, but the films had gone to the aviation field. I found out later that they would be developed in Madrid, censored and returned to Propaganda, and as no one seemed to be in any hurry at all I became almost desperate trying to hurry things up and get hold of the films.

Just before leaving for England I learned that the films in question would be shown to the various censor committees, who, if they considered it prudent to release the films, would instruct the Commission of Propaganda to have them dispatched via express transport to Paris.

The censoring problem is the biggest "headache" of all. During the Abyssinian War, one Committee was sufficient to enable one's films to be either rejected or released, but six or seven and even more censoring organisations have to be considered before Spanish war films can leave that country without further interference.

So ended nine days packed full of adventure, interest and, I must also say, some of the most pleasant moments with some very fine types of men—confident, happy, but terribly handicapped by the shortage of arms and ammunition.

# *My GRANDMOTHER has never met WALT DISNEY*

MY grandmother and Walt Disney have never met face to face. Which is a pity, for the old lady has always been one of his warmest admirers and one of his keenest critics.

Despite the fact that she long ago decided against the aspidistra as an outward symbol of respectability, and regretfully replaced the venetian blinds with casement curtains, she often does find it difficult to adjust her ideas to the rapidly changing standards of the nineteen-thirties. Being born in 1850 is rather a handicap at times.

The fashionable foible of studied discourtesy annoys her exceedingly, and she laments because the modern manner of bringing up children establishes a code of conduct which makes it unlikely the old-world niceties of behaviour will be revived in the near future.

While she accepts a glass of sherry as a lady's right she does not hold with cocktails, or with feminine smokers.

It is just as well to know how deep-rooted are some of her prejudices.

Yet she does accept with tolerance many of the changes brought about by alternating Victorian, Edwardian, Georgian and neo-Georgian rules of conduct.

In her time she has ridden a horse and in horsed carriages, cycled, welcomed the motor-car, and got as far as, at least, hankering after a journey by aeroplane.

Literary experiences range from "John Halifax, Gentleman", everything Charles Garvice ever wrote, and most of Anthony Trollope, to "All Quiet on the Western Front", and such American classics as "Little Women" and "The Postman always rings twice". We have not yet experimented with a Thorne Smith fantasy.

Needless to say the radio delights her, especially when a hot-rhythm is being broadcast. She is thankful to have seen the cinema reach something like maturity, and considers the talkies a great improvement on the silent films.

What I am leading up to, after giving a brief word-picture of the attitude of an elderly lady whose wonderful laugh sets quivering like an upholstered jelly some sixteen stone of lovable humanity, is that my grandmother had nothing to do with the respectabilification of Walt Disney.

I insist on that word, by the way. If it isn't in the dictionary it ought to be, placed there by the Women's Clubs of America who got into a communal state of hetupedness over the Silly Symphonies and insisted that in future Mickey Mouse must be very, very good, lest his mischievous pranks lead to imitative amorality in a land which has been made fit for such stalwart citizens as Al Capone and the late lamented Mr. Dillinger.

When Mr. Disney first wedded animated cartoon to appropriate sound accompaniment he had a genius for the childlike vulgarity which most of us learn to express in the nursery by the surreptitious recitation of traditional parodies on "The boy stood on the burning deck" and "The Workhouse Master".

To the inventor of the Silly Symphony it was beautiful and logical that his anthropomorphic creations should be vested with all reasonable human characteristics.

My grandmother never complained when a Disney lion, appreciating the elastic possibilities of a suddenly distended belly, tossed his navel high in the air, caught it dexterously in his mouth as it descended, and, with a chop-licking swallow, re-embellished the smooth expanse of front with a perfectly natural mark of punctuation.

My grandmother never accused Disney of having an umbilical complex. She didn't care a button for such things—never blushed at a naked tree nor wriggled uncomfortably at a contentedly uddered cow which, quite understandably, found red flannel drawers irksome.

As for Mickey she expected him to get up to all sorts of pranks.

No, it was the Women's Clubs of America who cleaned up the Silly Symphonies and forced the creation of Donald Duck to be the scapegoat of the cartoon world. No bad thing, this, until Donald himself began to quieten down in a most disheartening manner.

Sadie and Mamie, from the Middle West, keep butting in. They have made it virtually impossible for Minnie to appear with Mickey lest it suggest sex complications.

Thousands of well-meaning old dears have got together to become the new daughters of a moral revolution.

I sometimes picture them in solemn conclave, or staging one of those terribly bannered processions for which America is famous. And then giving battle to win the greatest navel victory of all time.

But nowhere among them do I discern the like of my grandmother.

The aspidistras have gone Middle West, the venetian blinds have been exported to Nashville, and we are packing up Trollope for presentation to the cloistered denizens of Sorghum City.

Disney has been tamed, and the draperies of the Statue of Liberty are drawn more tightly about her virgin frame.

And all grandmamma can say is "I don't think Mr. Disney's cartoons are quite so amusing as they were when I was younger". The only, er, deep laugh she's given lately was for the somnolent stork introduced into "Clock Cleaners". Have Sadie and Mamie seen the unfeathered posterior of that fantastic fowl?

Maybe they'd like to ask *their* grandmothers about it!

**Leslie Cargill**

# MARCH of TIME on the AIR

*Mr. C. W. Van Voorhis—The Voice of Time*

THERE is a steady chatter in the bar. Groups of two and three stand around. There is a chink of glass, muttered jests and the sound of laughter. On the end of the bar stands a radio; it softly pours out an innocuous background of sweet music. It is after ten o'clock. The oldsters who have been there all night are now finding seats in the odd corners and the youngsters just in from the first house of the films are taking their place at the bar. Someone turns up the volume control of the radio and a flood of music fills the bar. A cocktail is shaken in rhythm; a man taps a glass in time; a girl sways to the music.

The announcer's voice booms from the radio—"The March of Time". A girl attempts to get another station but a young man anticipates her so the announcer continues:

"This week in New London, Texas, roustabouts and derrick-men, workers in Rusk County's rich oil fields, line the ominously quiet main street, gather in groups outside tenantless store buildings which have been turned into morgues, escort quietly, sobbing women from one to another stop in the rounds they must make to claim their dead."

A hush has trembled along the length of the bar. The girl has stepped back from the radio. An old man has set down his glass of beer. He is polishing his spectacles. The bartender has poised in the polishing of a glass. The announcer continues:

"And all day long through a hardware store, past the line of lifeless bodies stretched out on the floor—bodies of grade-school children, high-school boys and girls—bodies bruised and dismembered—

CHARLIE

I don't think he's here, Fed.

BRIGGS

I'll just look if you don't mind.

CHARLIE

Be as quiet as you can.

BRIGGS

Sure . . . sure . . .(*Pause*) This is Billy Childreth. Somebody ought to tell his ma. . . .

***One of America's most popular radio features is The March of Time's broadcast. Adapting to the radio the technique so successful on the screen, its sponsors broadcast a weekly re-enactment of memorable scenes from the news of the world.***

***In describing this feature, Thomas Baird gives extracts from three episodes—the gas explosion at a school in New London, Texas, which killed 455 children, an account of the British Royal Families' visit to the British Industries Fair, and the taking of Malaga by Franco's army.***

★ ★ ★

CHARLIE

Mrs. Childreth was here, just a little while ago. (*Music*)

ANNOUNCER

Billy Childreth. Three fifteen o'clock in the manual training room of the New London's rural school.

TEACHER

You better tighten up that plane, Billy, if you expect a smooth surface on your table.

BILLY

Yes, Miss, I will.

TEACHER

Billy! Be careful. Turn off that motor. You'll take your fingers off adjusting that blade with the plane going.

BILLY

Say, Miss Butler, I finished my footstool, can I take it home tonight?

TEACHER

I'd give it another coat of varnish if I were you. Wait until to morrow.
(*Music up and down*)

ANNOUNCER

Through New London's hardware store, past the rows of blanket-covered figures on the floor, past the glittering shelves and show cases, all day, all night, the slow line moves; seeking their dead, a grimy oil worker, a young woman, a man and his wife:

JANE

Did you . . . find him, Joe?

DAVIDSON

You better come home with me now, Jane.

JANE

Joe . . . tell me.

DAVIDSON

Yes, I found him. (*Music sneak*) You better come home now, Jane.

ANNOUNCER

Five-year-old Joe Davidson, standing in the door of a classroom of the New London School.

JOE

Miss Arnold . . .

MISS A.

Yes . . .

JOE

Miss Arnold . . . My mother's gone to Overton . . .

MISS A.

Quiet. What is it, Joe?

JOE

She wanted me to ask you if I could stay here with my sister until school is out.

MISS A.

Of course you can, Joe. Just go right back and sit down with her.

JOE

Yes, ma'am.

MISS A.

I want to see everyone studying tomorrow's lesson. (*Music swells*) There's nothing to laugh about.
(*Music up and down*)

ANNOUNCER

(*Faint dry sobbing*) A woman is kneeling on the floor. A greyhaired man stands beside her.

MAN

Are you sure?

WOMAN

Anna . . . it's Anna . . . I know . . . it's Anna.

MAN

All right . . . all right . . .

WOMAN

Anna . . . Anna . . . Anna . . . (*Music*)

ANNOUNCER

Anna Mistead, the domestic room: 31: 5 o'clock:
(*Dishes in water and low chatter of girls*)

TEACHER

Girls! Girls! Some of you haven't finished washing the dishes and the bell's going to ring any minute now.

ANNA

May I take my cake up to Miss Walker?

TEACHER

After school, Anna, you haven't copied the recipe for tomorrow yet.
(*Music up and down*)

MRS. BARTON

Aren't there any more here, maybe in the back room . . .

MAN

No, ma'am, she might be at the feed store . . . they've taken some there.

MRS. BARTON

I've been there.

MAN

The church?

MRS. BARTON

No . . . no place, no place.

MAN

Ohh.

MRS. BARTON

Charlie . . . if you see a piece of cloth like this . . . blue and white checked . . . over to the school . . . will you call 'em? Lillian was wearing a blue and white checked dress. (*Music*)

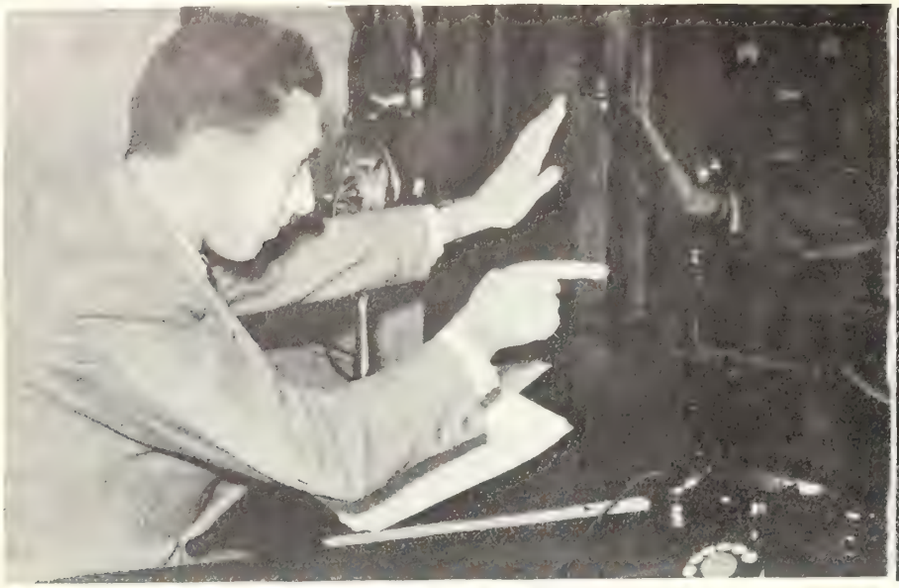
ANNOUNCER

But this week of 1937, death has claimed 455 children in the worst school disaster in U.S. history—the demolition of the New London Consolidated School, biggest and richest rural school in the world, in the heart of the Southwest's rich oil country, by an explosion of natural gas, reported by a military inquiry at week's end as due to cause or causes unknown—an act of God. TIME MARCHES ON!"

A middle-aged man quickly steps up to the bar: "Scotch." Then to a young man at the side he says: "Gotta coupla kids at school myself." The girl turns to the radio now with: "For God's sake give us some jazz." The old man's glass of beer is still on the table. He is polishing his spectacles. He hardly notices the burst of music which floods the shadows of the bar.

THE broadcasting studio is littered with scripts and gadgets. Sound effect machines stand in a forest of microphones. Five men sit in a corner playing cards. Two women are knitting. Rows of extras rustle their scripts and pencil-mark their lines. The producer is already behind his glass panel, and has his eye on the creeping hands of the large clock. At 10.25 he signals "stand-by" to his cast. The five men jump to their feet. Dollar bills are stuffed into their pockets and the cards are gathered up. The half-finished knitting is thrust into paper bags. The extras clear their throats. Then all is still. The second hand ticks round the face of the clock. As it covers the figure twelve the announcer, head back and hand on cheek, shouts: "The March of Time".

# Continuing 'March of Time on the Air'



In the huge British Industries Fair at London's suburb of Olympia, one day this week, decked with flags, crowded with buyers and sightseers; a young man, derby tipped on the back of his head, stands at the cutlery counter beside his wife.

FULLER

Now this piece here, Mae, would you say—

MAE

(*Half whisper*) Fred . . . look who's coming our way.

FULLER

Mae, please, we've got to finish up this buying.

MAE

Fred . . . right here. It's the King of England . . . King George.

FULLER (*awed*)

Why, it *is* him.

MAE

And Queen Elizabeth . . . and there's Queen Mary. Oh, Fred, they're going to go right past us.

FULLER

Gee . . . what're we supposed to do?

MAE

Take off your hat.

FULLER

Should I?

MAE

Of course. Take if off! And don't gawk . . . pretend as though we're looking at stuff.

QUEEN

I must stop here a moment.

MAE (*Whisper*)

Fred! Bow to her.

QUEEN

Clever things here . . . a red, white and blue knife . . . Oh, ah, can you tell me how much this knife is?

FULLER

I don't exactly know . . . ah . . . your Highness. I'm a buyer, not a seller.

QUEEN

Oh—oh, yes, surely. You're a visitor . . . an American?

FULLER

Yeah—ah, yes, I am . . . I'm from Brooklyn—name's Fuller, Fred Fuller.

QUEEN

How do you do.

FULLER

Oh, your Highness—ah—Majesty, let me present, ah . . . this is my wife, Mrs. Fuller.

QUEEN

How do you do, Mrs. Fuller, this is very nice to meet an American business man at our fair. And this is the king. Mr. and Mrs. Fuller from Brooklyn in America.

KING

How do you do.

QUEEN

And the Queen . . .

FULLER

Unh . . . your majesty . . . unh . . .

QUEEN

And the Duchess of Kent . . .

DUCHESS

How do you do, Mr. Fuller.

FULLER

How do.

QUEEN

And the Duke of Kent.

FULLER

Unh . . .

KENT

Being an American business man, Mr. Fuller, you can tell us how business really goes there now.

FULLER

Why, it's swell . . . Duke . . . your Majesty —ah—it's swell.

KENT

Splendid.

KING

If we're going to lunch, Mother . . .

QUEEN

Yes, George. Goodbye, Mrs. Fuller. Goodbye, Mr. Fuller. I trust your trip here has been successful.

FULLER

Oh, yes . . . yes . . . it's been swell. Goodbye, your Highness (*Feet and Murmur*) Mae—!?

MAE

Fred . . .

FULLER

How do you s'pose *that* happened—?

MAE

I don't know.

FULLER

She thought I was a salesman.

MAE

Yeah—maybe 'cause you had your hat off.

FULLER

And you . . . you didn't say a word . . . you just stood there.

MAE (*half sob*)

I couldn't, Fred . . . meeting them all like that . . . the whole royal family . . . Oh, Fred, let's sit down somewheres.
(*Music*)

FULLER

That royal family is all right . . . real folks . . . just like us. Queen Mary's nice as you'd ever hope to meet . . . and the Duke of Kent is a keen man. But the one that really took my eye was Marina, the Duchess of Kent . . . I tell you, she's beautiful! King George . . . well, I didn't get to know him . . he didn't have much to say, except he wanted to eat.

## 1937 MARCHES ON!

The five men return to their corners, quietly resume their regal game of nap; the women resume their knitting. Another group of actors have taken their place at the microphone.

(*Distant Rumble of Artillery*)

ANNOUNCER

Malaga—a seaport on the Mediterranean coast of Spain. For a full week the city has been under siege, surrounded on three sides by the Moorish and Italian troops of Rebel General Francisco Franco. It is late on the night of the seventh day. (*Tap Tap*) In a bare room in the working-class district (*Tap Tap*).

NITA

What is that? Mother! Listen! (*Tap Tap*)

1ST WOMAN

Sh, Nita, shh.

NITA

Who is it?

1ST WOMAN

I don't know. Wait—(*Bolt drawn, door opens*) Alvaro!

ALVARO

There is no time . . . listen, you must get away, you and the baby, tonight, now.

1ST WOMAN

Have they taken the city?

ALVARO

They will by morning. We couldn't hold them any longer . . . the Italians . . . take what food you can, whatever you can carry, and go out by the east road.

1ST WOMAN

Do we have to go? Couldn't we . . .?

ALVARO

They shot four thousand civilians when they took Badajoz. You've got to go, now.

1ST WOMAN

But where?

ALVARO

To Almeria. It is the only road that is open. I've got to tell the others and then go back.

1ST WOMAN

Alvaro!

ALVARO

Goodbye, Maria.

NITA

Goodbye, Daddy . . . goodbye.

ALVARO

Goodbye, baby. (*Music*) Goodbye—(*Music*)

ANNOUNCER

In the faint light of early morning, one hundred and fifty thousand men, women and children trudge out along the one road running eastward; sturdy peasant women from the vineyards of Vélez, old fishermen from Almunécar, workmen and their families from the city, fleeing before the Moors, the Germans, the Italians of Rebel General Francisco Franco.

Ahead are the little coastal villages, Almogia, Torrox, Narja; and the hope of safety at Almeria, one hundred miles away. From early morning, all day long they plod slowly eastward, choking the road, their straggling line of march stretching for miles; (*Plane high up*) all day, all night, on into the second day.

(*Dull Explosions*)

BOY

Are they dropping bombs on the people, Mother?

MOTHER

I don't know. (*Dull Explosion*) Holy Mother, pray for us. Blessed Jesus, have mercy on us. (*Explosion*) (*Plane going away*)

BOY

Mother—Mother—

MOTHER

Come, Carlo, come. We've got to go on.

BOY

Mother, look, back where the bomb landed on the road.

MOTHER

Don't, Carlo, don't look back there. Come now, (*Music*) we've got to go on.

(*Music*)

ANNOUNCER

The march of the hundred and fifty thousand. Daily from the west come rebel planes; a leisurely barrage of shells from rebel warships on the coast.

The third day; the fourth; there is no food. Water along the way has been fouled by men and animals. Dysentery is beginning. The sick, the wounded, the starved, stumble often on the white flint road. Those who cannot go on wait patiently to die. The fourth night comes; the fifth day; a woman with a baby wrapped in a dirty shawl is hurrying unsteadily up the line of march.

WOMAN

(*Dull, Exhausted*) Senora, senora, is there a priest? Is there a priest anywhere? (*Baby Cry*)

2ND WOMAN

A priest? I do not know.

WOMAN

For my baby. He was born yesterday, by the road. The priest to baptise him . . .

MAN

There is a town ahead . . . a few miles.

WOMAN

No. The baby is sick. He will not live.

MAN

Maybe there is a priest, perhaps further on . . .

(*Music*) ANNOUNCER

The march of the hundred and fifty thousand. Late on the fifth day; the first refugees finally reach the little seaport of Almeria. Evening; thousands are already huddled in the streets and in the Plaza of Almeria, because there is nowhere else to sleep.

A line of children is standing outside an emergency food depot.

NURSE

(*Plane, very distant*) Here you are . . . one for each child . . . step right up here, sonny.

3RD CHILD

Thank you, senora.

NURSE

Hold the cup in both hands.

4TH CHILD

Senora, I have a little brother—I couldn't carry him here—but could I have—

NURSE

Of course. Of course you can.

4TH CHILD

He is too little to eat bread.

NURSE

You take this milk for him.

4TH CHILD

It is so good to be here at last in Almeria.

NURSE

Yes, I know. Right up here, little girl—

3RD CHILD

Listen . . .

4TH CHILD

Airplanes? (*Distant Siren, Planes very high up*).

NURSE

Children, lie down, lie down flat in the street, all of you. (*Explosion, Screams, Explosions, Wiped out with Music*).

ANNOUNCER

In the year one forty-six B.C. the refugees of Carthage fled inland along the African coast to Alexandria before their doomed city was destroyed by Scipio. In the year seventy, two hundred thousand Jews fled from Jerusalem across the Jordan before the Legions of the Roman Titus. In the year twelve forty, Genghis Khan laid siege to Cracov, and a hundred thousand Poles fled westward into Saxony. In 1914, two hundred thousand Belgians left Antwerp and crossed safely into Holland. And this week for future history is told the flight from Malaga; the March of the One Hundred and Fifty Thousand; historic because it is one of the great mass evacuations of all time; because it is the first in history under conditions of modern warfare, the first to be attacked by modern long-range bombing planes even after the refugees have arrived at their destination. This week comments Canadian Dr. Norman Bethune, Chief of the Spanish-American Blood Transfusion Institute, stationed at Almeria:

DOCTOR

One hundred and fifty thousand people—including five thousand children less than ten years old, many without parents or relatives—setting out for safety to a town one hundred miles away; on foot; bombed thoughout the journey from the sea and from the air. After the air raid on Almeria, I picked up three children who had been standing in line with the others waiting for food. All three were dead. The flight from Malaga will go down in history as the most terrible mass evacuation of any city in modern times.

TIME MARCHES ON!

*Above: 'March of Time' Microphone faces. Opposite page: left, Director William Spier in the control room; Right, Agnes Moorehead and Patricia Peardon playing 'Queen Elizabeth and the Princess.'*

# MAGICIAN of the MOVIES

## The life and death of the great Georges Méliès—pioneer of trick photography—described by Stuart Legg

On December 28th, 1895 the Lumière brothers hired the basement of a Paris café from a doubting management, set up their projector, and invited the patrons upstairs to step down and see the show. Thirty-five people paid their francs, trooped downstairs, and became the world's first movie audience. What they saw is now a matter of history; workers leaving a factory, a train arriving at a station (several fainted as the engine approached the camera) and a comedy called *L'Arroseur arrosé*. There was also a film of a bathing belle. "The sea in this picture", wrote an enthusiastic journalist, "is a veritable marvel, so true to life, so wide, so vivid, so moving". When the audience left at the end of the show one man remained behind. He was Georges Méliès.

Méliès was 34. He came of a wealthy Paris family. He was a jack-of-all-trades, endowed with a vivid imagination and a love of making things with his hands. In his early twenties his manual skill had made him in turn factory worker, mechanic, cabinet-maker and designer. Later he took to painting and caricature. But his principal passion was conjuring. At the age of 26 he bought the Théatre Robert-Houdin in the Passage de l'Opéra. Here he sought to revive the mid-nineteenth century pantomime tradition of Debureau in his own terms. He staged "des spectacles" such as "La Guirlande Magique" and "Le Tableau de Fantaisie" in which illusion of every kind, including his own conjuring, was the principal attraction. He became producer, actor, scene painter. He built sets out of old bits of three-ply and property swords out of soap-boxes with a rapidity that astonished his colleagues. He rigged up electric circuits for special effects. "I was an intellectual worker and a manual worker at the same time", he said.

Small wonder then that when he saw his first films Méliès should remain behind when everyone else had gone. Here was a new medium for spectacles, a new way of making magic. "I marvelled at it", he declared. Somehow or other he must get hold of the means of making films. "I went up to Lumière and tried to make him sell me his invention. I offered him ten thousand francs, twenty thousand, fifty thousand. I was prepared to offer him my whole fortune, my house, my family possessions." But Lumière would not listen. He said: "Young man, my invention is not for sale, and in any case it would only ruin you. Perhaps for a time it may be exploited as a scientific curiosity, but apart from that it has no commercial future whatever".

This refusal did not count for much with Méliès. The rainy, wobbling films had given him the thrill of his life and he was determined, Lumière or no Lumière, to make films himself. If he could not buy someone else's equipment, then he would make his own. He had designed intricate machines for his theatre and he was a skilled mechanic. Given money, the problems were not insuperable. He came to London and bought film from Paul, the pioneer English producer.

His camera finished, Méliès roamed about shooting anything that interested him. He shot regiments on the march, traffic in the streets, trains arriving and leaving. Then he bethought him of the acts at his own theatre. One of these was a disappearing woman. It was an act of which Méliès was proud; it drew large audiences, and professionals had failed to discover how it was done. He filmed it under the title of *Escamotage d'une Femme chez Robert-Houdin*. But the film was not a success. "Evidently," said Méliès, "the whole thing appeared childish on the screen. The audience could only see a lot of smoke and flames. They did not get the idea."

Then, in 1896, occurred the celebrated incident which showed Méliès the first secret of trick photography. He was shooting in the Paris streets, using a tripod camera. While he was turning, his camera jammed and stopped. He cleared the jam and continued shooting. When the shot appeared on the screen a bus, which was in the centre of the viewfinder at the moment of the jam, suddenly turned into a hearse. This was the clue that Méliès had been subconsciously looking for. He realised that the cinema did not require magic thrust upon it as in *Escamotage d'une Femme*. It could make magic of its own accord. Three days later he began his first trick film.

Within a short period he had discovered many of the effects we know to-day. In *Le Manoir du Diable*, *Le Cauchemar*, *Le Cabinet de Méphistophélès*, *La Vie de Jeanne D'Arc* and other films made before the turn of the century he used fast and slow motion, superimposition, one-turn-one-picture photography and fades. In *Orchestre*

he made multiple exposures and acted with himself in the same shot. In another film he caused a lump of clay to shape itself into a statue by reversed shooting. His work became the envy of his rivals: but Méliès kept his secrets well, and for several years no one could guess how his tricks were done.

Until 1897 interior shooting was unheard of. Film was slow and apertures comparatively small. But in that year the singer Paulus came to Méliès and asked to be filmed in one of his operatic parts. Méliès agreed, but at the last minute Paulus refused to undergo the ordeal of appearing in the open air in costume and make-up. Méliès collected as much artificial light as he could, painted a backcloth, placed Paulus against it, and for the first time in movie history shot a film indoors. A few months later he built himself a studio at Montreuil, "a cross," as he said "between a photographer's studio and a theatre stage." It was about thirty yards long and twelve across. At the stage end were a multitude of trap-doors, concealed holes and movable panels designed to facilitate the sudden appearances and vanishings of his actors. There were capstans, winches and pulleys to enable the principals to descend from the skies, to float on air and to rise again. The roof was of glass, and though in 1898 he installed electric lamps, Méliès was mainly dependent upon the sun for his lighting. "You have to work fast," he said, "for if you lose time you lose the sun, and then good-bye to shooting."

The studio gave Méliès new opportunities. He was able to combine trick photography and cutting with his own feats of conjuring. His films grew longer, faster in tempo and more complex in action. His output increased until, by 1900, he was making a film a week in addition to three 'superproductions' of 1,500 feet each—*Cendrillon*, *Petit Chaperon Rouge* and *Barbe Bleu*. A staff of nearly 50 girls was employed in making coloured versions of every film.

"Film-making," he wrote, "offers such a variety of pursuits, demands such a quantity of work of all kinds and claims so sustained an attention that I did not hesitate to proclaim it the most attractive and fascinating of all the arts. The film director uses a bit of everything: dramatics, design, painting, sculpture, architecture, mechanics, manual labour; all are employed in equal doses in this extraordinary profession." Considering that one of the minor production difficulties of the time was the fact that the day's rushes had to be cut into six-foot strips and developed separately, Méliès's statements about sustained attention cannot be regarded as an exaggeration.

From a combination of conjuring and trick photography it was a short step for Méliès to fantastic narrative. Between 1902 and 1906 he produced (among many others) four story films—*Voyage dans la Lune*, *Voyage à Travers l'Impossible*, *Quartre Cents Coups du Diable*, and *Le Raid Paris-Monte Carlo in Cinque Heures*—which are generally considered to be his greatest work. In these films reality was banished. It was replaced by a fairy world in which incredible machines, commonplace objects and strange people changed places with increasing acceleration in a whirl of superb colour and movement. In *Quartre Cents Coups du Diable* clocks vomited demons, people stalked about the ceiling, the Aurora and the Great Bear met in mortal combat, Saturn leapt from his rings, women burst forth from a juggler's umbrella. Méliès was a poet as well as a magician.

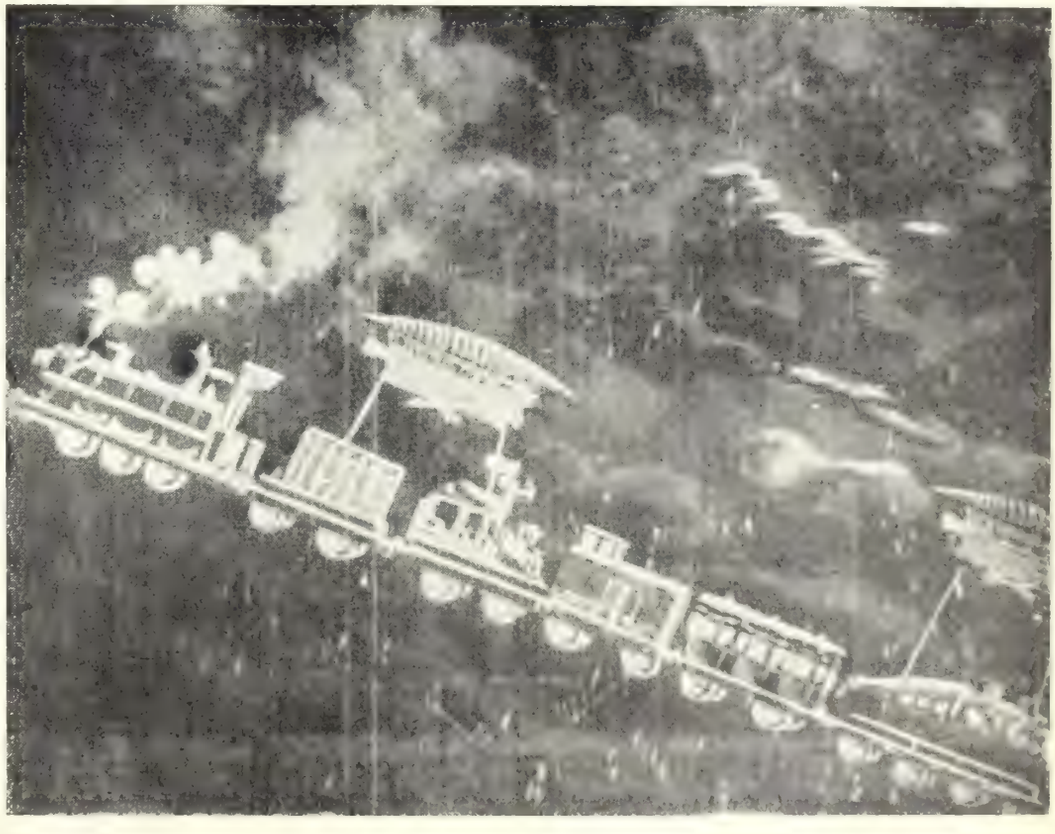
He was also, on occasion, a realist. He staged several dramatic reconstructions of contemporary events, and thus anticipated the March of Time by some twenty-five years. Best known of these were *L'Affaire Dreyfus* and *La Couronnement du Roi Edouard VII*. In the latter the king was played by a wine merchant from the Place d'Italie. Edward VII saw the film during a visit to Paris and is reported to have been highly gratified.

It was between 1908 and 1910 that Méliès's troubles began. In the early days it had been the custom for producers to sell copies of their films outright to the exhibitors. But as time went on Gaumont, Pathé and other powerful French organisations took to renting instead. Méliès did not follow suit. He spent money liberally (*Voyage dans la Lune* cost some £1,500) and he wanted a quick return to ensure continuity of production. But with the more convenient system of hiring at their disposal, exhibitors would no longer buy. Competition increased as a result of the American production boom of 1908. Rival French firms discovered Méliès' secrets and imitated them. Gradually his clientèle fell away.

For some years he continued producing. In 1912 came *La Conquête du Pole*, with Father Pole, bearded and terrible, devouring a party of explorers. During the War he made fairy stories for children; *La Fée Libellule*, *Le Lac Enchanté*, *La Bonne Bergère et La Mauvaise Princesse* and others. But the star system was rising; the entertainment demands of war were not attuned to fairy tales; the cinema was settling into mass production and the forms of familiar convention.

In 1914 the offices of Méliès's company were commandeered by the military. An almost complete set of copies of his films, covering twenty years of his work, were on the premises. But to move them, to rent a new office and equip new vaults would have cost more than Méliès could now afford. He sold his films to a junk merchant who resold them as industrial celluloid.

For many years Méliès was no more seen. In 1928 someone recognised him in the streets of Paris. He was selling newspapers. His friends got up a subscription to buy him a tobacco kiosk near the Gare St. Lazare. When he became too old to sell cigarettes and sweets the Chambre Syndicale Française du Cinématographe, which he founded in 1897 and of which he was president for ten years, arranged for him to live in the Maison de Retraite d'Orly, a home for destitute actors. "I have been in retirement here for three years," he wrote in 1936 to an English director. "Being the dean of cinematographers (the first one after Lumière) I am an old man, 75 years old; and since I want to stay on earth as long as possible I have to take precautions." On January 22nd, 1938, he died of cancer. He had no money, and the expenses of his funeral were defrayed by French and English film workers.



*Top left: Original drawing by Georges Méliès for "Voyage dans la Lune."*
*Above: The journey through space, from "Voyage à Travers l'impossible."*

# "YOU DON'T Believe Your EYES"

**Astounded, incredulous, Maxim Gorki reviewed the first public exhibition of moving pictures held in Paris in 1896**

I AM afraid I am an undependable correspondent—without finishing the description of the factory department, I am writing about the cinematograph. But possibly I will be excused for wanting to give you my fresh impressions.

The cinematograph is a moving photograph. A beam of electric light is projected on a large screen, mounted in a dark room. And a photograph appears on the cloth screen, about two and a half yards long and a yard and a half high. We see a street in Paris. The picture shows carriages, children, pedestrians, frozen into immobility, trees covered with leaves. All of these are still. The general background is the gray tone of an engraving; all objects and figures seem to be 1/10th of their natural size.

And suddenly there is a sound somewhere, the picture shivers, you don't believe your own eyes.

The carriages are moving straight at you, the pedestrians are walking, children are playing with a dog, the leaves are fluttering on the trees, and bicyclists roll along . . . and all this, coming from somewhere in the perspective of the picture, moves swiftly along, approaching the edge of the screen, and vanishes beyond it. It appears from outside the screen, moves to the background, grows smaller, and vanishes around the corner of the building, behind the line of carriages . . . In front of you a strange life is stirring, the real, living, feverish life of a main street of France, life which speeds past between two lines of many-storied buildings, like the Terek at Daryal, and nevertheless it is tiny, gray, monotonous, inexpressibly strange.

And suddenly it disappears. Your eyes see a plain piece of white cloth in a wide black frame, and it seems as if nothing had been there. You feel that you have imagined something that you had just seen with your own eyes—and that's all. You feel indefinably awestruck.

And again another picture. A gardener is watering flowers. The stream of water issuing from the hose falls upon the leaves of the trees, on flowerbeds, on the grass, the flowerpots, and the leaves quiver under the spray.

A little boy, poorly dressed, his face in a mischievous smile, enters the garden and steps on the hose behind the gardener's back. The stream of water becomes thinner and thinner. The gardener is perplexed; the boy can hardly keep from breaking into laughter—his cheeks are puffed out with the effort. And at the very moment that the gardener brings the nozzle close to his nose to see what's the matter, the boy takes his foot off the hose! The stream of water hits the gardener in the face—you think the spray is going to hit you, too, and instinctively shrink back . . . But on the screen the wet gardener chases the mischievous boy; they run far away, growing smaller, and finally at the very edge of the picture, almost ready to fall to the floor, they grapple with each other. Having caught the boy, the gardener pulls him by the ear and spanks him. . . . They disappear. You are impressed by this lively scene, full of motion, taking place in deepest silence.

Another new picture on the screen. Three respectable men are playing whist. One of them is a clean-shaven gentleman, with the visage of a high government official, laughing with what must be a deep, bass laugh. Opposite him a nervous, wiry partner restlessly picks the cards from the table, cupidity in his gray face. The third person is pouring beer that the waiter had brought to the table; the waiter, stopping behind the nervous player, looks at his cards with tense curiosity. The players deal the cards and . . . the shadows break into soundless laughter. All of them laugh, even the waiter with his hands on hips, quite disrespectful in the presence of these respectable bourgeois. And this soundless laughter, the laughter of gray muscles in gray faces, quivering with excitement, is so fantastic. From it there blows upon you something that is cold, something too unlike a living thing.

Laughing like shadows, they disappear like shadows . . . .

From far off an express train is rushing at you—look out! It speeds along just as if shot out of a giant gun. It speeds straight at you, threatening to run you over. The station-master hurriedly runs alongside it. The silent, soundless locomotive is at the very edge of the picture . . . The public nervously shifts in its chairs—this huge machine of iron and steel will rush into the dark room and crush everybody in it . . . But, appearing on the gray wall, the locomotive disappears beyond the frame of the screen, and the string of cars comes to a stop. The usual scene of crowding throngs when a train reaches a station. The gray people soundlessly cry out, soundlessly laugh, silently walk, kiss each other without a sound.

Your nerves are strained; imagination carries you to some unnaturally monotonous life, a life without colour and without sound, but full of movement, the life of ghosts, or of people *damned* to the damnation of eternal silence, people who have been deprived of all the colours of life, all its sounds, and they are almost all the better for it . . .

It is terrifying to see this gray movement of gray shadows, noiseless and silent. Mayn't this already be an intimation of life in the future? Say what you will—but this is a strain on the nerves. A wide use can be predicted, without fear of making a mistake, for this invention, in view of its tremendous originality. How great is its productivity, compared with the expenditure of nervous energy? Is it possible for it to attain such useful application as to compensate for the nervous strain it produces in the spectator? This is an important question, a still more important question in that our nerves are getting weaker and weaker, are growing more and more unstrung, are reacting less and less forcefully to the simple "impressions of daily life" and thirst more and more eagerly for new, strong, unusual, burning, and strange impressions. The cinematograph gives you them—and the nerves will grow cultivated on the one hand, and dulled on the other! The thirst for such strange, fantastic impressions as it gives will grow ever greater, and we will be increasingly less able and less desirous of grasping the everyday impressions of ordinary life. This thirst for the strange and the new can lead us far, very far, and "The Saloon of Death" may be shifted from the Paris of the end of the nineteenth century to the Moscow of the beginning of the twentieth.

I forgot to say that the cinematograph is shown at Aumond's, the well-known Charles Aumond's, the former stableman for General Boisdefre, they say.

Up to now our charming Charles Aumond has brought with him only 120 French women "stars" and ten men; his cinematograph exhibits so far very nice pictures, as you see. But, of course, this is not for long, and it is to be expected that the cinematograph will show "piquant" scenes of the life of the Paris demi-monde. "Piquant" here means debauched, and nothing else.

In addition to the pictures mentioned, there are two others. Lyons: women workers leave a factory. A crowd of lively, moving, gay, laughing women leave the wide gates, run across the screen and vanish. All of them are so nice, with such modest, lively faces, ennobled by toil. And in the dark room they are gazed at by their fellow-country-women, intensively gay, unnaturally noisy, extravagantly dressed, with some make-up on their faces, and incapable of understanding their Lyons compatriots.

The other picture is *The Family Breakfast*. A modest couple with a chubby first-born, "baby", is sitting at the table.

"She" is making coffee over an alcohol lamp, and with a loving smile looks on while her handsome young husband feeds his son with a spoon, feeds and smiles with the laughter of a happy man. Outside the window the leaves flutter, noiselessly flutter; the baby smiles at his father with all his chubby chin; everything bears the stamp of such a healthy, hearty, simple atmosphere.

And this picture is looked at by women deprived of the happiness of having a husband and children, the gay women "from Aumond's," stirred by the astonishment and envy of respectable women for their knowing how to dress, and the contempt, the disgusted feeling produced by their profession. They look on and laugh . . . but it is quite possible that their hearts ache with anguish. And it is possible that this gray picture of happiness, this soundless picture of the life of shadows is for them the shadow of the past, the shadow of their past thoughts and dreams of the possibility of such a life as this, but a life with bright, sounding laughter, a colourful life. And possibly many of them, looking at this picture, would like to cry, but cannot; they must laugh, for that is their sorrowful profession . . .

At Aumond's these two pictures are something in the nature of hard, biting irony for the women of his hall, and will doubtless be removed. I am convinced that they will soon, very soon, be replaced by pictures in a genre more suited to the "Concert Parisien" and the demands of the fair. And the cinematograph, the scientific importance of which is as yet incomprehensible to me, will cater to the tastes of the fair and the debauchery of its hangers-on.

It will show illustrations to the works of De Sade and to the adventures of the Chevalier Fauxblas; it can provide the fair with pictures of the countless falls of Mlle. Nana, the protegée of the Parisian bourgeoisie, the beloved child of Emile Zola. Rather than serve science and aid in the perfection of man, it will serve the Nizhni-Novgorod Fair and help to popularise debauchery. Lumière borrowed the idea of moving photography from Edison, borrowed, developed and completed it, and probably did not foresee where and for whom his invention would be demonstrated.

It is surprising that the fair has not examined the possibilities of X-rays, and why Aumond, Toulon, Lomache and Co. have not yet utilised them for amusement and diversion. And this omission is a very serious one!

Besides. Possibly to-morrow X-rays will also appear on the screen at Aumond's, used in some way or other for "belly dances".

There is nothing in the world so great and beautiful but that man can vulgarise and dishonour it. And even in the clouds, where formerly ideals and dreams dwelt, they now want to print advertisements—for improved toilets, I suppose.

Hasn't this been mentioned in print yet? Never mind—you'll soon see it.

THE above translation from the Russian film magazine 'KINO ART' was made by Leonard Mins for 'The New Theatre,' where it first appeared.

## EMIL KOHL

TWO years ago an old man of eighty dressed in an ancient cutaway tail coat and shabby top-hat came to see me in Paris. Deaf and forgetful, there still clung to him an old-fashioned elegance of speech and manner. It had taken me a week of enquiries to discover his whereabouts, somewhere on the outskirts of Paris, where he was living on poor relief. His card, surrounded by half an inch of black, bore the legendary name of Monsieur Emil Kohl, animated cartoonist. Kohl, inventor of the cartoon film, died last month in a Paris hospital, forgotten by almost everyone in the French film industry.

Wistfully, Kohl told me that, much as he would like to assist me to find his films, he regretted he had no idea where they were. He feared that perhaps they had been destroyed, or again perhaps they were somewhere in America. After a pause in which he endeavoured to recollect the past, he continued:

"It was Monsieur Leon Gaumont who distributed them, but that was a long time ago, twenty-five years perhaps. You must excuse me, Madame—or is it Mademoiselle? I have forgotten a great deal. I regret there is so little I can tell you. Some were four hundred metres long".

I asked him whether it was true that he was the inventor of the cartoon.

"They say so, but who can tell? I think I am", Kohl answered. "I believe I remember making *Fantouche* in 1908".

*Fantouche*, one of Kohl's earliest cartoons, is a remarkable film, and no less extraordinary is his slightly later picture, *The Adventures of Baron Crack*. In both cartoons the characters, a jealous husband, a faithless wife, an enamoured policeman and the adventurous Baron, are executed in the style of children's drawings in white lines on black. Though the drawing is extremely simple, no cartoons before Disney have the same inventiveness, nor use inanimate objects with such imagination. Houses, lamp-posts and machines are endowed with intelligence and movement of their own. They walk about and are dramatised—an idea which disappeared during the war when the cartoon superseded in popularity other styles of trick film. In *Baron Crack*, the Baron, who plays with the elements as well as birds and pre-war machines with the nonchalance of a comic demi-god, monopolises a bird to transport him over a most abstract-looking sea; suddenly it vanishes, leaving its wings on the Baron's shoulders!

These early cartoons are two of the most interesting I've found for a picture covering the development of the cartoon, which I am making with the assistance of Karl Heinz Frank for the Film Institute. In Kohl's work one finds a preliminary sketch for much that develops later. His cartoons contain the elements of the realistic story fully developed by Fleischer in *Popeye*, as well as the fabulous fancies that delight Disney. Though Kohl was forgotten by the trade, he is still an encyclopædia for the technician.

**Marie Seton**

# GENTLEMEN UNDERSTAND WAR

***Russell Ferguson's provocative attack on the viewpoint expressed in***

## *La Grande Illusion*

***the French Film about war which has attracted so much attention from the critics***

WAR brings out the best in us. This great truth, illustrated again and again in the work of Kipling, has been obscured for the last twenty years by the hysterical ravings of skunks like Siegfried Sassoon, Wilfred Owen, Herbert Read, and the impossible Hemingway. The indestructible chivalry of mankind has been insufficiently reported. The newsreels from Spain and China haven't helped much, all full of bombs and gas and refugees. with the emphasis on all the wrong things, We needed *La Grande Illusion* to redress the balance.

The lesson of the film is that when we mow each other down with machine guns and cook each other with mustard gas, we don't mean any harm. There's nothing personal in it. With all these Hemingways running loose, this had been forgotten. Rauffenstein puts it very well, just before he shoots Boeldieu through the stomach. He says, "I very much dread doing this" (meaning, "This hurts me more than it hurts you.") Unhappily, though it is Rauffenstein that gets hurt, it is Boeldieu that dies.

The death scene is very moving. Rauffenstein says, "I am terribly sorry. If I had known you were only pretending to escape, I should not have shot you. Anyway, I aimed at your legs". "Not at all, old fellow", says the dying man. "You only did your duty." (There once was a man who got his eye poked out with a lady's umbrella. She said she was very sorry. He said, "Never mind, Madam, I have another one".) Anyway, Rauffenstein goes to a small table which is standing near, and pours out a drink, looks at it reflectively, and drinks it up quickly. Then he goes back to the bedside and reverently closes the dead man's eyes.

War is, of course, an indispensable condition in scenes like these. How can you forgive somebody with your dying breath, if you are not dying? How can you bless those who persecute you, if nobody does? Boeldieu is a lucky man—he sacrifices his life for his country, keeps his parole, forgives his German friend, and expires in a blaze of glory. He owes Rauffenstein a considerable debt, for giving him a chance to die so bravely. Rauffenstein, at the other end of the gun, does not do so badly either. The unique circumstances enable him to show his love for his country in the most exalted manner, by killing a man he is very fond of. Thus do the conditions of war sanctify what would, in peace time, be a crime so unfortunate that it couldn't even happen.

Boeldieu, as it turned out, was merely throwing a dummy, to let two of his colleagues escape. This was a noble action, but he wasn't doing it for them *personally*, as he explained when they tried to thank him. There was nothing personal in it ; it was for the flag. Which sounded like a smack in the face to the two bewildered rankers, but Rauffenstein understood, being an officer and a gentleman. And Boeldieu understood there was nothing personal in it when he got shot. Gentlemen understand war. Burning Joan of Arc was just a piece of tactics, as the Earl of Warwick explained to her. He meant her no harm, personally.

But the lower ranks are different, and often the personal element creeps in, with disastrous results. What happens then is the worst thing possible—the war stops altogether. It is sometimes very difficult to get it started again.

In the recent street riots in Paris, both sides used to pack up the riot every night in time for the last Tube home, and turn out next morning, hurrying into the city in case they should be late for the riot. This arrangement, incomprehensible to military minds, was simply a mutual understanding of personal convenience.

The Paris rioting wasn't a proper war of course, but the same thing happens in proper wars, too. There was the famous occasion when the Western Front was disturbed by a distressing outbreak of fraternising, brought on by Christmas parcels, and aggravated, no doubt, by extra issues of rum. Had the feeling been allowed to spread, the war might have been brought to a complete standstill, but the officers were able to stamp it out before it got really serious.

Similar incidents were common, they say, in the American Civil War. At blackberry-time, the troops used to sound a truce and pick berries in No Man's Land. Sometimes both sides got tired of shooting each other across a river, and went swimming instead. These were the lapses of half-trained troops, who had not learned that fraternising is the most dangerous thing in any war, because if it goes too far, peace may break out.

But Rauffenstein, the true officer, the real military man, has himself so well in hand that he can afford to unbend with his prisoner, and yet be sure he will be able to shoot, when the occasion arises. It is very difficult, but he is big enough to do it.

For the most part, happily, such personal encounters are few in modern warfare, in which the enemy is generally out of sight. The real test of the soldier is hand-to-hand fighting. It is easy enough to train him to pull the lanyard of a gun, there's nothing very personal in that; or to spray an advancing host with machine-gun bullets, there's nothing very personal in that; or to drop a bomb on people far below, there's nothing very personal in that; but when he is faced with an individual at bayonet-range, things are a bit awkward. There is a grave danger that he will be overcome with private feelings, and find himself unable to stick the iron into his opposite number.

For this particular situation, a different technique has had to be evolved. The personal feeling is so immediate and so urgent, that it has to be offset with a personal feeling of the opposite kind. This is done in the following way.

At bayonet practice, an orator stands by, and tells the men what a horrid, loathsome, dangerous species of vermin the Boche is. He works the men up with great skill, until they reach a pitch of excitement in which they scarcely know where they are, or what they are doing, except that they have to keep on lunging and twisting. It was a detail of the bayonet practice that made everybody laugh, in one of Buster Keaton's early comedies. The instructor was saying, "And when you get him, don't just pull the bayonet out. Twist it round and round," when suddenly Buster fainted. Everybody laughed at that, but, of course, the incident had its serious side. It showed how difficult it is to take a raw recruit and make a real soldier of him.

But we have come down too far from the altitude of Renoir's film, which is about officers. This is very important. Officers do not use bayonets, or rifles, in fact it is quite possible, and even usual, for them to have a long and useful life, without ever killing anybody with their own hands, and a very good thing too, for they are thus able to preserve their proper professional detachment from the more sordid details of their work. (Some of them, like Tony Perelli, can play the violin. Some of them, in fact, do.)

This detachment is important and must be preserved by every possible means. Field organisation takes full account of this. Nowadays, the higher an officer's rank, the further he is from the firing line. This system ensures that the most responsible men are farthest away from the sordid details; thus their morale is kept up, a most important point, and the morale of the troops gains, in consequence. For, if the general knew too much about the fighting conditions, he might hesitate to send his men into action, and if the men did not go into action, what would become of the war?

The settings and the treatment in this film are exactly right. It is about the best in us, and it is quiet and as smooth as silk. *Journey's End* was noisier, for it was about an officer's behaviour in the field. *All Quiet* was about soldiers fighting, and it was so full of bangs and dead men, that the ex-soldiers in the cinema got shell-shock all over again. This is all very proper, so far as artistic treatment goes, for there are levels of altitude in war which correspond with the rank of those engaged in it. Very high war takes place in the capitals, behind locked doors. Very low war takes place exactly midway, between the trenches. In our film, the war is higher than in any other war-film yet made—it is neither tactical nor physical, but spiritual, so it takes place outside of the world altogether, partly in a prison and partly in a high mountain farm. The theatre of war, strictly speaking, is Rauffenstein's soul. There the battle is fought between the Fatherland and Boeldieu. The Fatherland wins—which is just as it should be, if we must have war, as Hitler and Mussolini tell us.

The final result is a film which is just about ideal for the beginning of a new war. Wars begin in the starry altitudes of loyalty and devotion. (The Fascists have already got most of the work done in this department.) As the war goes on, the men think less and less of what they have come from, and more and more of what they are going to. By the end of the war, they have heard so many loud bangs and seen so many dead men and broadcast viscera, that they can't forget it for twenty years, during which we hear nothing but the whining of Hemingways.

After about twenty years a new generation has arrived, so it's game to start all over again. Off we go, on the highest plane once again. Your home and your loved ones, your king and your country, the boys are wonderful, wonderful; and at this stage, it is very reassuring to be convinced once again, that war is not really killing, and Rauffenstein did not *really* kill Boeldieu, but just executed him, and Boeldieu *liked* being killed anyway, and war brings out the best in us, and the Lads at the Front are Marvellous.

*The German peasant (Dita Parlo) finds the two French Officers hiding in her farm.*

# SPEEDSTERS replace COWBOYS

## in the serial films of today. Thomas Baird recalls the glories of the old serials, and laments their passing.

A LITTLE over twenty years ago, I started to go to the pictures. I was then a small boy living in a provincial city. There was quite a ritual about this picture-going. The first requirement was a penny. Pennies only come on Saturdays and, strange coincidence, the "Penny Matinee" came on the same day. Part of the ritual was to forswear the sweetie shops on Saturday morning. This called for severe discipline. It is true that we children had watched the highly dramatic posters all the week. Early on Monday morning the bill poster had pasted them up opposite the school gate. At the eleven o'clock interval we hoisted each other up on to the school wall to see the new posters. From the top of the wall would come shouts of: "It's a cowboy", or "It's about lions", or "There's a man in a mask". Imagination eked out these brief abstracts, and by Saturday excitement was at fever pitch; many a Friday night was sleepless in anticipation. But still it was difficult to pass the sweetie shop and occasionally we succumbed to the temptation of toffee-apples and liquorice straps. Once the precious penny was broken there was nothing for it but to get the greatest value by spending in four shops. But Saturday afternoon was a misery without the matinee.

The second item of the ritual was to be at the picture house fully an hour before the programme commenced. We had to stand in a queue and fight periodically to keep our positions. In the quiet periods we read comics, Buffalo Bills, and Sexton Blakes. Part of the ritual was to swap comics. As a story was finished off a shout went up of: "Swap you comics", and there was great reaching and struggling to pass the paper to someone else in the queue.

About fifteen minutes to three o'clock the queue grew tense. Comics were stuffed in pockets and the battle to retain a place in the queue started. The struggling and pushing continued for about five minutes. Then the doors opened and a stream of children spilled into the picture house. There was a fight for the best seats. The right of possession meant little, and many a well-directed push slid a small boy from a well-earned seat into the passage.

Occasionally the programme was suitable, and by that I mean interesting to us children. Often, however, the feature was quite meaningless to us. On rare occasions I can remember films like *Last Days of Pompeii, Tarzan of the Apes*, Cowboy films, *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*, and the war films, giving us unexpected thrills, but in the main we went for the more comprehensible shorts: Bronco Billy, John Bunny, the Keystone Kops, Ford Sterling, Fatty Arbuckle, then one day a funny little waiter who afterwards we learned to call "Charlie". Newsreels with soldiers, guns and bursting shells we loved. But we went for one thing above all others—the serial. These were the days of the *Clutching Hand, The Exploits of Elaine, The Black Box* and *The Laughing Mask*. Many of the names have faded and been forgotten, but I can recall that the heroine *par excellence* of all small boys was Pearl White. As Elaine she triumphed week after week, and later, changing with the times, she was *Pearl of the Army*. The villain of villains was an oriental called Warner Oland and, if I remember rightly, he was the Clutching Hand Himself, but this I will not swear to because these old serials had already learned the trick of making the obviously bad man become good in the last reel. I can remember living through fifteen exciting weeks to learn who the Clutching Hand was: to-day I can't remember whether it was Oland or not. I seem to be losing my sense of values. Week after week we followed Warner Oland through his baleful adventures. Later he became the malevolent Dr. Fu Manchu. Then for a while I missed him, but, joy of joys, he reappeared as Charlie Chan. It is sad news that he has, perhaps, made his last picture. He has been one of my symbols of a changing cinema; the evil and the nefarious Clutching Hand became in time a prolific and model parent and fought on the side of the angels.

The blonde hero and partner of Pearl White in so many of these episodes was Crighton Hale. To us, twenty years ago, he was a superman. He could hang for a week to the edge of a cliff and on the next Saturday miraculously climb to safety. It is perhaps a greater miracle that we, who, in imitation, hung from the washing-house roof, escaped with our lives. But the master mind—the great detective—was Craig Kennedy. That is the name of the character. I doubt if I ever knew the actor's name and can still remember my astonishment when he turned up as a naval officer in a feature picture. He existed only for us as a detective with no other function than to answer the plea of Crighton Hale to discover the whereabouts of Pearl White, or, out of bubbling retorts, to distil the antidote to the bite of the beetle which Warner Oland had secreted in her bouquet of flowers.

Periodically, a rumour ran round. It was whispered in hushed tones in the waiting queue and passed from lip to lip along the rows of excited children. Pearl White was dead. Somebody's uncle had read in a paper —not an ordinary paper, but an American paper—that she had been killed jumping from an express train on to a motor-cycle. But she kept turning up week after week and this continual resurrection was sufficient to discount each rumour.

Last week I attended a press view of a serial. All the old characters were there. A black-faced villain (Julian Rivero), a thin-lipped henchman (Jason Robarts), a beautiful schoolboy's heroine (Lola Lane), a juvenile of strange intelligence and unerring instinct (Frankie Darro) and a hero, smiling, confident, wise, resourceful and athletic (Jack Mulhall). There they all were, and in episode after episode they romped through their tantalizing escapades. The hero leapt from certain death at the end of one reel to equally certain safety at the beginning of the next; falling in mid air at the end of part three, he easily caught hold of a beam at the beginning of part four; flung from a racing car at the end of part four, he landed safely,

with never a scratch, in part five. The scream of the heroine in part one turned through tears to laughter in part two; the leer of certain triumph of the villain in part nine turned to a scowl of miserable defeat in part ten.

I was unable to sit through all the hours necessary to reach the satisfactory conclusion which must be inevitable in the final episode, but I am sure that *Burn 'Em Up Barnes* kissed Miss Lane in the end, that Frankie Darro achieved his aim both of a college education and being an ace cameraman, that the villains met a sticky end, in a burning racing-car, that Miss Lane never signed that deed which would have ruined her, and which she threatened to sign at least ten times and would have signed, had not Mr. Mulhall, driving at 413.03 miles per hour, arrived in THE NICK OF TIME. Of all these things I am certain, and who would have it otherwise?

But even with all these familiar items I felt a little strange in the face of this serial. The fatal contract was there; true, the evil leers; true, the heroic athletics; but it was all set in a strange new world. There was no oriental mystery, no cowboy horses, no swift smuggling of drugs, no torture chamber, no shooting, no labs. with fantastic chemistry, no death-ray. It was all set for the new generation of youngsters who read "Popular Mechanics" in the Saturday queues and not for me, with my world of Sexton Blake and Buffalo Bill. The hero is a racing driver. The vital document was not a faded parchment taken from an old sea chest but a cinematograph film taken on a Mitchell. The hidden wealth was not gold but oil. Death came not suddenly by poisoned arrow or slowly in the torture chamber, but fiercely in burning automobiles or lingeringly on the sidewalks after a crash.

*The picture on the opposite page is from a* 1914 *Pearl White serial, 'The Perils of Pauline,' and is reproduced from Gilbert Seldes's 'Movies for the Million'* (*Batsford, 7s 6d.*) *by permission of the publishers. Above: Buck Jones in 'The Phantom Rider.'*

# SPEECH ON THE SCREEN

## A second selection, in response to many requests, of well-written and amusing prose speeches

*Burn 'Em Up Barnes* is for a new generation, and even with my tender years I do not belong.

### *Captains Courageous*

*Spencer Tracy as Manuel*
(*Screen Play by J. L. Mahin, Marc Connelly and Dale Van Every*)

*Manuel:* Say, my father when he alive, he make better songs than me. Songs about the sun and the sea, songs about the clouds. Big songs about the wind and the storm. And little songs too, about the tip of my mother's nose. Oh, my father he feel beautiful inside.

*Harvey:* Is that all he did was sing?

*Manuel:* Is that . . .? My father was the best fisherman in the whole Madeira islands, and that's everyplace.

*Harvey:* Well, that's not so much.

*Manuel:* How you mean, 'not so much'?

*Harvey:* Well, I mean he didn't do much for you. He didn't leave you anything.

*Manuel:* He didn't le . . .? He—he leave me this hurdy-gurdy that his grandfather leave him. He teach me how to fish, how to sail boat. He give me arms and hands and feet. How to feel good outside and he teach me how to feel good inside. My father do all this and he have seventeen other kids beside. What else a father do?

### *Nothing Sacred*

*Charles Winninger as Dr. Downer*
(*Screen Play by Ben Hecht*)

*Downer:* You know what I think, young feller? I think yer a newspaper man. I can smell 'em. I've always been able to smell 'em. Excuse me while I open the windows. I'll tell you briefly what I think of newspapermen. The hand of God reaching down into the mire couldn't elevate one of 'em to the depths of degradation. Not by a million miles. I'm a fair-minded man, young feller, but when you been robbed, swindled, cheated, for twenty-two years out of a fortune, it's pardonable to formulate an opinion. Moses in the Mountain! You're from the Morning Star! Stay right where you are. Don't move—I'll show ya somethin' that'll freeze ya. I entered this contest with a clean pair of hands. Who are the six Greatest Americans? I named them and proved why—writing on one side of the paper. And what happened? Did I win the ten thousand dollars? No, siree! Did I win the five thousand? Did they even try to save their face by giving me one of the smaller one thousand dollar prizes? Not that gang of chicken thieves. Here's what they gave me. Read it. A cheque for one dollar.

The Morning Star had its chance to win my respect twenty-two years ago. They saw fit to swindle and belittle me. Very well. I'll prove to them before I die who the six great Americans are and who was entitled to the first prize.

Do you know who got that ten thousand dollars? The editor's wife—that's who.

### *Marie Walewska*

*Charles Boyer as Napoleon*
(*Screen Play by S. Hoffenstein, S. Virtel and S. N. Behrman*)

My victories stand in the sun, Marie—but I have known defeat.

When I was a little boy at school, I was poor and timid and despised. I was thin and underfed. There was a great fireplace in the hall, it was bitterly cold. I used to try to get near the fire, but the bigger boys crowded me away. I could never get warm enough. I haven't been warm enough since. I shall never be warm enough.

That was defeat. When I was twenty-seven I left the woman I adored to lead an Army of the Republic. The world acclaimed me as the Saviour of France. My wife received the news of my victories in the arms of other men. That was defeat.

The ties of blood are strong in me. I have placed my brothers and sisters upon thrones. They have rewarded me with their quarrels, their jealousies, their selfishness. That is another defeat. And I have no son. Nobody. Only my mother has remained.

My mother. But even she—after all—a man suffers alone, dies alone, dreams alone. My dreams—I want to achieve the impossible—peace in Europe. Victories breed wars of revenge, wars of revenge breed wars of reprisal—an endless cycle of bloodshed. I want to destroy forever that wavering balance of power that means war with every tilt of the scale. My dream is to achieve a United States in Europe. There is a new idea abroad in the world—the idea of democracy. Men are created free and equal. We are human beings first, and races and nations afterwards. I want a federated Europe, with a common law, a common interest, a common happiness, a common hope for the future!

And they call me a tyrant. And they frighten little children with my name. That, too, is defeat.

The next time you see me standing in the sun, remember this. Good night, Madame.

# RALPH RICHARDSON and LAURENCE OLIVIER

***The Othello and Iago of Tyrone Guthrie's latest venture at the Old Vic, London. Interviewed for W.F.N. by Henry Adler.***

THE tall, swarthy Moor, wearing his vivid Eastern gown and smoking a large briar pipe, invited me to a seat in his dressing room. In a moment, a gamboge but handsome face looked in, which I recognised as that of the more elusive Iago. I had been chasing him for days. But Mr. Olivier, believing that an actor's job ends with acting, does not normally grant interviews. He smiled, and curled up in a chair.

"Since you *are* here," he said, "perhaps we can talk together."

The strong lights in the little room glared down at the sleek head of the "hellish villain" and the glossy, leonine mane of the majestic Moor. This was a godsend. I had wanted to speak to either Laurence Olivier or to Ralph Richardson. I had hoped that I might even separately speak to both. But here were both simultaneously; close friends, two of the most interesting and versatile personalities in films and the theatre, now opposed in the dramatically contrasting roles of Othello and Iago.

* * *

In 1921, in a performance of "The Merchant of Venice" at the Brighton Little Theatre, Lorenzo was played by a nineteen-year-old youth named Ralph Richardson. In 1922, in a boy's production of "The Taming of the Shrew" at the Stratford Memorial Theatre, Katharina was played by a boy of fifteen named Laurence Olivier.

Olivier studied under Elsie Fogerty, and Richardson toured in the provinces for four years and then joined the Birmingham Repertory Company, appearing as Arthur Varwell in their production of "Yellow Sands". In 1928, Olivier joined the Company, and played Malcolm in the modern dress "Macbeth", a play in which he did not reappear for ten years. Richardson and he acted together for the first time, the former as the Lord, and the latter as Tranio, in "The Taming of the Shrew", and in "Back to Methuselah".

He played Michael (Beau) Geste in the play; Victor Prynne in the brilliant quartet including Gertrude Lawrence, Adrienne Allan, and Noel Coward which comprised "Private Lives"; played the same part in New York, then went to Hollywood. The films in which he appeared included: *The Yellow Ticket*, *Westward Passage*, and *Friends and Lovers*.

In 1934, he played Bothwell in Gordon Daviot's "Queen of Scots" in which, as will be remembered, Gwen Ffrangçon-Davies played the title-rôle. He supported Marie Tempest in "Theatre Royal" and, becoming actor-manager, appeared in "The Golden Arrow" at the Whitehall.

In 1935, he played Mercutio to John Gielgud's Romeo, and then Romeo. St. John Ervine said that this was the best Romeo he had seen. His success seems to have led naturally to his career at the Old Vic, and to his film career of which *Fire Over England* and *The Divorce of Lady X* are the two most striking examples.

Ralph Richardson returned to Shakespeare earlier. It is amusing to note that he returned to it in Othello, but as Roderigo! This was in 1930, with Paul Robeson playing the Moor, while Olivier was in "Private Lives". Richardson then joined the Old Vic Company, playing the Prince of Wales in "Henry the Fourth, Part One", Caliban, Bolingbroke, Enobarbus, Sir Toby Belch, and Bluntschli in Shaw's "Arms and the Man". He appeared in the Festival Company at Malvern, together with Robert Donat, returned to the Vic-Wells Company to play the Ghost and the First Grave-Digger in "Hamlet", a contrast indicative of his ability in both tragedy and comedy, and acted in "Othello" for the second time, now as Iago to Wilfred Walter's Moor.

In the next summer, he returned to Malvern and played Sergeant Fielding in Shaw's "Too True to be Good". He came back to London and acted in two Maugham plays; as Collie Stratton in "For Services Rendered" and in the title-rôle of "Sheppey". After playing Mr. Darling and Captain Hook in the Palladium "Peter Pan", he acted in two Priestley plays, in "Eden End" and as Cornelius in the play of that name.

In 1935, while Olivier was playing Mercutio in London, Richardson was playing the same part when touring with Katherine Cornell in America. The rest of his career is familiar history, his stage appearance as Doctor Clitterhouse, and his films: The Colonel in *The Man Who Could Work Miracles*, the Boss in *The Shape of Things to Come*. Illustrative of his versatility is the fact that recently one could leave one cinema, after seeing Richardson in the comedy rôle of the dim-witted Lord Mear in *The Divorce of Lady X*, and enter another one to see him as the squire in *South Riding*. Now he is playing "Othello" for the fourth time, and his progress is symbolised by the fact that this time he is playing the title-rôle.

* * *

"It's funny about Othello," said Mr. Richardson. "I know the play so well. I've played Roderigo, and Iago to Wilfred Walter's Othello at the Old Vic, and now it's Othello himself. When I hear people speaking my old parts, it's like hearing ghosts. I want to stop and correct them."

*Above: Ralph Richardson as Othello, Curigwen Lewis as Desdemona; on opposite page Laurence Olivier as Iago.*

"Othello," said Mr. Richardson in a measured voice to which I suspect the dignity of the role has much contributed, "Othello is not a part one *plays* in the ordinary sense. You have to back up the sort of thin part you get in modern plays with your own personality. But I, for one, haven't the strength, let alone the desire, to elaborate on the tremendous part that Shakespeare has written. It's about as much as a man with normal strength can do to 'read the score'."

"It's Othello's play," said Mr. Olivier. "Iago speaks in short passages. He hasn't any of those tremendous speeches, and emotional climaxes. Iago doesn't rival Othello in importance."

Othello removed his pipe from his mouth, turned his sombre, coffee-coloured face toward Iago, and fixed his large, mysterious eyes reprovingly on him. "I don't know about that," he said mildly. "Iago speaks in short bursts, but he's whirring all the time—like a sewing machine. He's a man of great nervous energy—"

"—who might have been great," agreed Iago, "He has been perverted and frustrated by jealousy at being passed over for the captaincy. It might happen to anyone. Suppose Ralph and I were condemned to play film extra parts all the time, not allowed decent parts at all. We should either have to put on plays for ourselves, or go mad like Al Capone in prison, or go wrong as anyone would who has strength and energy that's denied expression. If it hadn't been for jealousy, Iago might have been a great man."

"All Shakespeare's tragedies," said Mr. Richardson, "deal with greatness misdirected or destroyed through a frailty. Mr. Gielgud who, of course, has a great understanding of Shakespeare, suggested to me that Othello is a saint overcome by villainy. But I don't think Othello was a saint. Despite his greatness I think that jealousy was in him all the time. I admit that there's an objection to that. In almost his last speech Othello speaks of himself as "One not easily jealous."

"Not *easily* jealous," said Mr. Olivier. "But capable of jealousy."

"Yes," agreed Mr. Richardson, "I think he's a more tragic figure like that. If you regard him as a majestic oak, and Iago a little fuse niggling away in the trunk and finally blowing it up,—well, where's the tragedy? A big tree has been knocked down. We say: Tut-tut! It's a sad accident! But it's not a tragedy. You get tragedy only when your characters are of human stature, not gods, when despite greatness, one sees in them the flaw and weakness which destroys them—from inside. I can understand the jealousy of Othello because I'm jealous myself. It comes through pride."

"Future plans?" repeated Mr. Olivier. "I don't know. I don't know at all. This stage work gives one a freedom which films, by their very nature, can't. You can move on the stage, place yourself where you like in the audience's eye, select your climaxes. You can't do that in films."

"Laughton can say: 'I want the cameras to concentrate on my eyes in this scene'", commented Mr. Richardson. "He, and Chaplin, can make the camera do what they want, make it bring out their strong points. But Laughton and Chaplin have a unique position. For the most part, the director says: 'I'd like a close-up here, and a long shot there,'" and Mr. Richardson mimed god-like manipulations with lengths of celluloid, " and the actor is passive material. Yes, the stage gives more scope."

Mr. Richardson and Mr. Olivier looked thoughtfully at the clock.

"Well . . ." said Mr. Richardson.

"Heigh-ho," said Mr. Olivier.

"Good-bye," said Mr. Olivier.

"Good-bye," said Mr. Richardson.

# The CONQUEST of the AIR

Two years ago while the birds of finance were flying high and Mr. Wells was shaping things to come, Alexander Korda decided to make *The Conquest of the Air*. It was to be the first feature documentary. John Monk Saunders was hired to write the script, because he'd written scripts for *Wings* and *Dawn Patrol*, but when he produced his script, things began to go wrong. Director after director tried to make something of it. Zoltan Korda did a couple of sequences, Les Garmes shot scenes at Stirling Castle, William Cameron Menzies and John Monk Saunders tried their hands. Production costs mounted and so did publicity. There were brushes with technical experts; glorious stills appeared all over the world. But it was no use. The picture had to be shelved. All that had been achieved were some isolated sequences, some good and some bad, which never began to look like a picture.

A few months ago Alexander Korda decided to take the film off the shelf and see what could be done. He has always been a producer of good intention and *Conquest* was a good intention he highly prized. He called in Donald Taylor, head of Strand Films to produce the film. A production unit was formed consisting of Alexander Shaw (Director), George Noble (Cameraman), and Richard Q. MacNaughten (Editor). A limited production budget was assigned and a new script written. Now after four months' work

★ ★ ★

# A first view

## (Exclusive to W.F.N.)

★ ★

*The Conquest of the Air* has been completed, the first feature length documentary. *WFN* has secured a first view of the completed film. It is a six-reeler and the first reaction is that it holds its length. This is remarkable, inasmuch as there is no story link, the film being a historical narration of fact. It begins with a simple wind sequence, "The wind bloweth where it listeth and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." It follows with an impression that man's highest aspiration has always been to rise to the sky, and as he was unable to accomplish this himself he invested his gods and devils with the power. The next sequence is the bird-men, who attempted to fly with wings attached to their bodies. Succeeding them are the scientists, Roger Bacon, Leonardo da Vinci and Borreli who envisaged machines to carry men into the air.

Time lapses and continuity are maintained by titles, perhaps a little pompous in tone. The era of the balloonists follows; the first ascent of a man is re-staged. The failure of the balloon is shown and the early experimenters like Sir George Cayley, Henson and Stringfellow point the way to the development of the aeroplane. At this point in the film there seems to be some weakness, as the development of the combustion engine and its importance in the development of the aeroplane is not sufficiently stressed. The experiments of Lilienthal are shown with much photographic beauty. The re-creation of the Wright Brothers' first flight follows, and with a commendable courage the producers have photographed this on a windy, dull day, a circumstance which enhances the drama of man's first controlled flight. A brief sequence shows types of early aeroplanes and leads into Bleriot's historic flight across the Channel. Then comes the war, with man's dreams turned to his own destruction. From this point on the film becomes aggressively documentary, the progress of flying, from the war until now, is shown in terms of record-breakers. All the heroic figures flash across the screen in a March of Time sequence, the record breakers coming off better in retrospect than their modern critics will allow. Modern civil aviation forms the next sequence, with a background of the devices that make air travel safe. Next a fast-moving sequence shows the part of the aeroplane in modern life, apart from carrying passengers and freight. Then, after an orgy of information, the producers let themselves go with a sequence on the beauty of flight—"To-day the aeroplane soars like a bird . . . it flies on serene to continue man's conquest of the air". This sequence is on the long side and could do with judicious pruning. It is a pity too, that in this sequence Arthur Bliss who composed the music has not caught the intention of the producers. The film is delicate, exciting and graceful but the music is fussy. However, Bliss has not done a bad job on the rest of the film. *Conquest* comes back to fact with a sequence on Piccard and the stratosphere, but soon leaves it for an ending which is an imaginative conception of rocket planes of the future which may travel faster than sound.

It will be seen that the film covers a great deal of ground, mostly technical ground too, and it is a tribute to the producers that they have maintained the interest for one hour.

Two interesting things emerge from this film. First, that flying and the conquest of the air has never been a materialist idea. The men who conquered and are conquering the air to-day are idealists, and the film gives them that credit. The second interesting point is the subordination of the actors to the idea. Although there are one or two names, Laurence Olivier, Margaretta Scott, and other well-known actors, they never obtrude their personalities over the scene they are enacting. It would have been disaster in a film of this nature had it been so.

Individual credit must go to the cameramen, Wilkie Cooper, Hans Schneeberger and George Noble, who have turned in a handsome job. The film covers every branch of movie work; there are diagrams, historical prints, crowd scenes in studio and on location; there is documentary material, newsreel material, trick work and model work; there are animated titles and much back projection. All the technicians deserve credit for making the film homogeneous.

We will reserve our critical appraisal until the film is released, but pending this we bring these notes on a production whose success or failure may have important repercussions not only on the documentary movement, but also on the industry.

David Thompson

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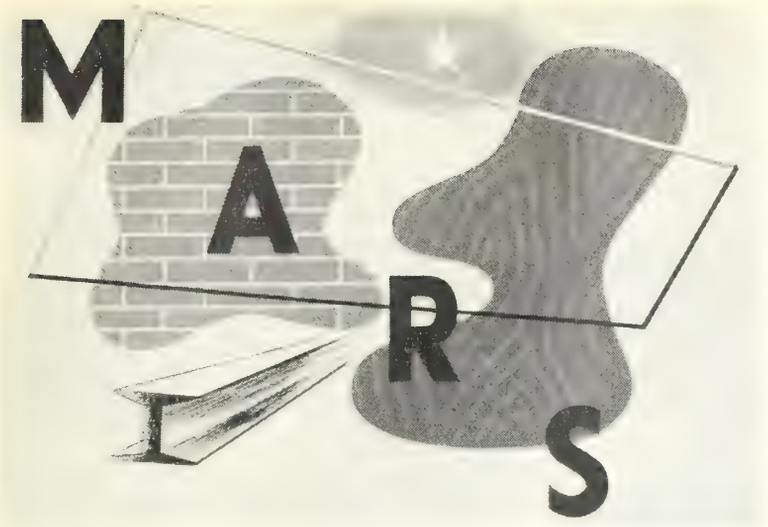



# HOUSES — but not to LIVE IN!

## Arthur Elton among the Architects

No capitals on their columns. No capitals in their catalogue. Such is one side of "modern" architecture. It is a symptom which is important to everyone who takes serious notice of public relations, for this is formalism. Formalism has plunged Russia into an aesthetic chaos and has led to bloodshed and execution. In this country, formalism is as small as a cloud the size of a man's hand, but like Rotha's speeded up symbolic clouds, it may soon cover the sky. It would not be important were it not that in the storm which follows, many admirable works wrongly identified with formalism will be swept away; for the good will be taken with the bad.

It is architecture to which we must turn to study the movement, for architecture has a permanence which the other arts lack. The formalist film can be kept in its tin, formalist and surrealist paintings can be taken down from your walls if you choose to cut your losses, formalist books need not be read. But formalist architecture costs money to build, costs money to destroy. Early this year an exhibition of modern architecture appeared, sponsored by the Mars Group. The first three letters stand for "Modern Architectural Research." The "S" seems to be a gratuitous addition. Perhaps it stands for "Sez you?"

The exhibition was sensibly arranged so that a spectator could start at the beginning and walk through in an orderly way. But fearing the practical, disdaining the pedantic, the exhibits were out to startle. Entertainment rather than instruction was the note. Somehow one felt this was not particularly modern. The arrangers of the exhibition seem to have noted all the vulgar showmanship of the box-office film, but had little of its refreshing technical virtuosity.

The front of its catalogue, which we illustrate above, is typical. You will see that it has two squiggly symbolic shapes, one for brickwork and one for wood. Underneath them is a girder, the essential core of almost any building. The Mars outlook, shies at reality. Its symbolic bricks have a living quality because they are not real, but the girder, badly drawn, weak and footling, has not caught the imagination of the artist. Like a good Victorian he plumped for decoration without content, and so it was with the exhibition. The exhibition contained some examples of good architecture and excellent photographs, but it had no ability to fit them into a clearly thought out whole. A muddle-headed philosophy guided their display.

Most of us admit the world we live in is chaotic, undisciplined, unplanned. Here at the Mars group, one would have said, was the opportunity to bring to a focus the constructive ideas which, were they but used, could create a fine new world. But the opportunity was not taken. Instead of practical fact and practical diagram, a mass of symbols shook the eye of the spectator. (Can there be Victorian insular prejudice somewhere? Can one explain otherwise how the Mars Group, with the Paris Exhibition under their nose, could in so apparently calculated a way make all the mistakes which that great exhibition avoided?)

It is worth carrying this investigation a little farther for the Mars Exhibition does not represent only the stuttering ideas of a few enthusiasts; it is a beacon and a warning. The truth is that these people are the new Victorians. Victorian in their love of complex inessentials obscuring essential truth but alas, not Victorian in their gusto. The Mars Group mind has the complexity of the St. Pancras Hotel but not its *joie de vivre*.

The first thing that struck the visitor to the Mars Group was a room which claimed 'to state the problem'. Building needs for habitation; building needs for work, architecture for the service of the community; transport and town planning. Fine sounding words. But the ideas were presented in shabby symbols. The maps were obscured by fiddle faddle novelties of moving photographs and obscure transparencies. Next, one went down a passage to see the contribution of the scientist, the engineer and the manufacturer. But photo-muddlage had come into its own. Perhaps the scientists were scientific, perhaps the engineers were good constructors, perhaps the manufacturers manufactured well. But all we grasped is that they provide fine raw material for the photo-muddler.

Next the domestic scene. The place where we live and eat and where our children (if we have any) play. In the sitting-room it was striking that everything was massive, cubic and apparently either built into the wall or attached to the floor. Here, we can imagine the architect saying, is what *I* think *you* ought to live in. So that my ideas shall not be disturbed, I shall make every effort to prevent you having any ideas at all. I shall arrange for the walls to have no pictures, you shall have no chance to rearrange according to the whims of your personal tastes. There shall be no mess, no personality.

That this is not absolutely unfair may be illustrated by a conversation I had at the Design In Industry's Congress at Bexhill. He was an architect. He said the trouble with re-housing working-class people is that they take their ornaments and pictures to their new home and spoil the look of the rooms. So, he smirked, I am going to make the mantlepiece like a gabled roof so that no ornaments can stand on it. For buildings are built for architects, not for people to live in.

The Mars Group excelled itself on the nursery. Perhaps the designer was not familiar with children. Hard and sharp corners with a double-tier bunk for two children to sleep in (are we not allowed to have more than two children?). The top bunk was reached by a rope ladder and was several feet from the floor. The children of the future will be morons or be paralysed. These will be the only ones to survive. The rest will have fallen out of the top bunk and broken their necks.

Then a great big splash of photographs and models, many of them fine and interesting. But putting labels on the photographs to say what they represent was bowing to the natural and vicious curiosity of the bystander.

Then, finally, some pictures of people of the future. What place will women have? For the Mars Group, women should be kept either in the nursery or in the kitchen. And here one finished one's walk through the new Victorian Age, Victorian in its intellectual fussiness, Victorian in its complacency, but without the gusto, the pleasure in fussiness for its own sake, the reverence of the scientist which so nobly offset the defects of Victorian aesthetics.

And how does all this affect you and me, you may ask. It affects us very much, for groups like the Mars Group have not only embraced the shoddy bad things, but are blurring the creative outline of fine things too. When the tide turns against Mars you will find Le Bourget airport being razed to the ground as formalist. The clear-headed citizen looking for ways to rebuild his cities will sheer off the fine discoveries of science into the arms of the Royal Academy and the R.I.B.A. We shall be in the grip of people like the firm which recently marketed tiles of imitation thatch.

# The Cinema Becomes In

AFTER devoting some forty odd years to dramatising everything from the binary fission of an amoeba to the disintegration of the universe, and after being practically reduced to thumbing through the old family album to while away the time, the motion picture has suddenly awakened to the realisation that there still remains at least one substantially virgin source of subject-matter upon which it has scarcely touched—i.e., the motion picture.

For many years in its spare moments, the cinema has been taking hasty little peeks at itself in the mirror, but it was not until 1937 that it stopped long enough to get a reasonably full-length view, and—Narcissus-like—became fascinated with itself. The result was *A Star is Born* in which the motion picture took a public screen test and discovered its photogenic and box-office potentialities. The latter quality, particularly, impressed the movie moguls and there were soon forthcoming such introspective efforts as *It Happened in Hollywood*, *Super Sleuth*, *Pick a Star*, *Hollywood Cowboy*, *Ali Baba Goes to Town*, and *Stand-In*.

This bumper crop of cinematic autobiographies is for the most part on the lighter side, a prima facie indication that the cinema agrees with the George Jean Nathans in not taking itself seriously. It would appear that despite its corporate solidity, the motion picture still enjoys a playful romp and possesses a happy facility for publicly chucking itself under the chin. Who ever heard of such a comparable behemoth as the American Tel. and Tel. giving itself a neatly placed boot in the seat of the pants? Yet this is precisely

*Above: Hollywood Boulevard.*

*Right: A scene from 'Stand-In,' with Leslie Howard, Joan Blondell and Humphrey Bogart.*

*On opposite page: A paving-stone in the lobby of the Chinese Theatre, Hollywood.*

# trospective by Ezra Goodman

what the motion picture is doing. Either that, or it is feigning the slapstick posture in the interests of bigger and better grosses.

Perhaps this quizzical self-regard should be taken as an indication of a worldly maturity, but it is of interest to note that the motion picture was already being convulsed by itself in its infancy. One of the early Keystone comedies that Charlie Chaplin did for Mack Sennett was a highly irreverent slapstick diagnosis. This uninhibited opus, *The Film Johnny*, is set in a movie studio that is peopled with such birds of a feather as Chester Conklin, Fatty Arbuckle, Charlie Murray and Charlie Chase. Charlie (Chaplin) is vociferously instructed by the madly gesticulating director to make his dramatic entrance before the astonished eye of the grinding camera at the precise moment in the climactic scene when a 200 pound unmotivated brute is on the verge of throttling a sleeping infant in its crib. Charlie, of course, misses his cue, thereby precipitating a number of fast motion chases, pitched battles, free-for-alls, and skidding fests that ultimately involve the entire studio personnel for the greater part of a reel.

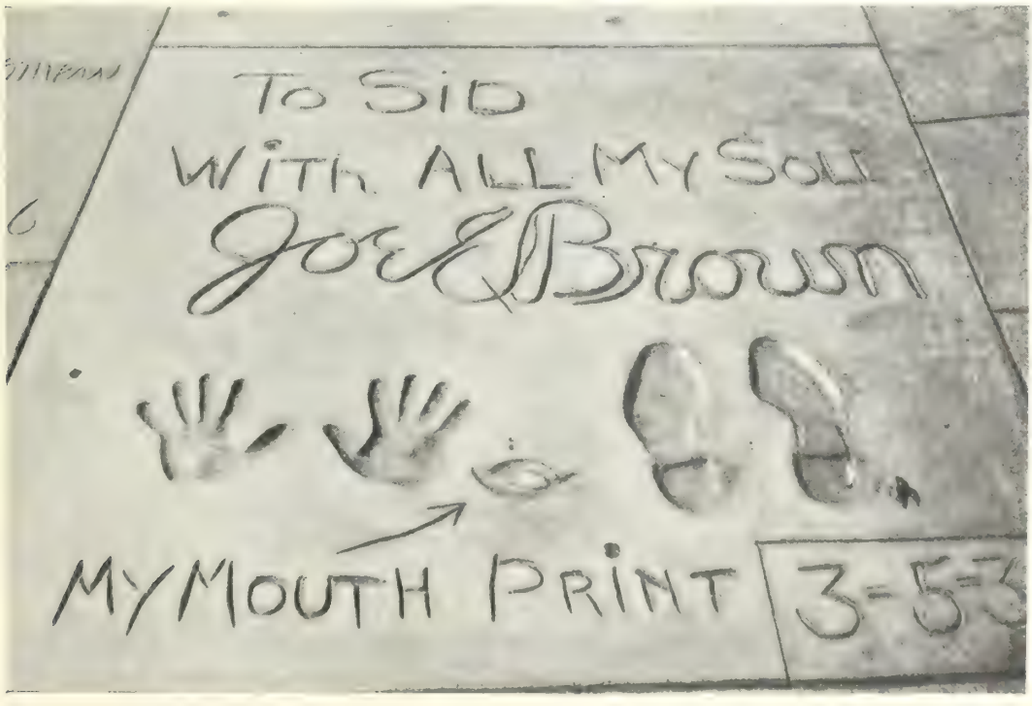
These early films of studio life were in all probability inspired by reasons of economy. In those blithe days before the advent of "prestige" pictures, swimming pools, and neurotic ingénues, films were budgeted at a few hundred dollars each, and one way of cutting down on this unheard of expense was to dispense with the sets. And what more simple method of accomplishing this than to use the studio itself (which, naturally, already existed) as the background for the action. All that was necessary in the way of environment was a movable wall, a few actors, a cameraman cranking a dummy camera, and a pseudo-director. It is significant that directors in those days had not yet assumed the habiliments of cap and riding boots. Those knick-knacks came in later when the cinema went highbrow and began to budget its films in the thousands of dollars. To-day, when the expense account of a major film reads like the deficit of the United States government, the directors are again going bare-headed and bootless.

Motion pictures dealing with studio life continued to appear on and off for the next two decades. In 1923, for example, James Cruze directed a film, entitled appropriately enough *Hollywood*, and since then, that title with slight variations has served to identify most films purporting to hold a mirror up to the cinema. Paramount made its first version of the Harry Leon Wilson novel *Merton of the Movies* in 1924. One of the few films to deal with studio life in a more serious mood was *The Last Command* (1928) in which Emil Jannings was sentimentally seen as a small part player. Also about extras and bit-players was *The Life and Death of a Hollywood Extra*, directed by Robert Florey in 1929. More recently, besides the occasional routine productions, there have been adaptations of stage plays lampooning Hollywood, such as *Once in a Lifetime*, *Personal Appearance*, *Go West*, *Young Man*, and *Stage Door*, which was wisely stripped of its unreasoning tirade against Hollywood. And so the films went, until this year's deluge.

It is safe to say that the motion picture is the only art that has succeeded in dramatising itself. The secret of this success lies in the disparity in technical equipment between the cinema and the other arts. The novelist, poet and dramatist compose their immortal works with a pen or pencil upon a pad of paper. Let us even charitably assume that they are equipped with a typewriter, or a dictaphone, nevertheless the entire external process of artistic creation is as uninspiring and undramatic as a man feeding his pet goldfish. Even the painter with his palette, the sculptor with his clay and the musician with his piano are not appreciably more enthralling. But the motion picture—ah! There one has huge spotlights, exciting streamlined cameras, travelling cranes, swinging microphones and other mechanical incidentals. There the process of creation is often more dramatic and awe-inspiring than the creation itself. The director of a grade C quicky, jauntily perched on the chariot-like platform of a zig-zagging dolley is a more immediately intriguing figure than the immortal Rembrandt of a Charles Laughton. Beside the godlike cameraman, dauntlessly winging his way through space beneath the arc lights on the back of a zooming crane, the dwarfed hero and heroine on the studio floor beneath pale into insignificance. In short, there is more drama being enacted behind the scenes than there is before them.

That all this technical and mechanical rigmarole, as well as the mortals who move about in its midst, are resplendent screen material is what the cinema has finally realised. A posing and posturing, to be sure, and a certain amount of gilding the lily are considered essential ingredients in the final product. And from the technical viewpoint alone, there is much that the cinema has yet to dish up, although it is improbable that any future revelations will come as a surprise to most moviegoers, what with all the confidential lowdowns syndicated from Hollywood daily. By now, every resident of that vast area between New York City and Hollywood which is known as the United States has probably been apprised of the fact that a filmic interior usually lacks at least the fourth wall and a ceiling, that the ocean liner sinking in mid-ocean is a miniature model in a studio tank, and that all is not what it seems to be, etc. It may well be that the feeling of superiority engendered in the spectator by "being in" on the illusion makes the entire business even more fascinating.

To date, the cinema's own approach to itself, as evident from its filmic output, has been either tenderly sentimental or irreverently slapstick. It now remains for the screen —if it must hold the mirror up to itself instead of to the world about it—to strike a balance between these exaggerations and give us, whether in the guise of comedy or drama, a more sober and sincere self-analysis. No doubt, this is asking too much of an art that has in large measure yet to receive a sober and unprejudiced analysis from both its creators, critics and the world at large.



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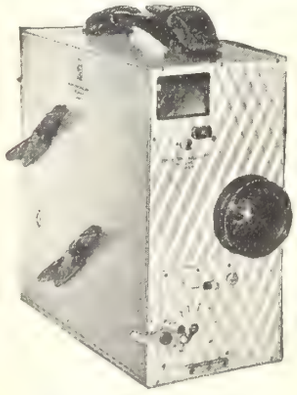

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# Where every NIGHT is Saturday AFTERNOON

## An American visitor re-captures the excitement of early movie days with a British audience.

THE Saturday afternoons spent in a neighbourhood movie in Chicago watching the latest chapter of *Border Bandits* seem a long way off both in time and space. But if any nostalgic American wants to recapture the spirit of those exciting days of his childhood, let him visit some London cinema where most of the audience has just finished a day of dull labour. The audience is much older than the 8–11 it used to be in Chicago but not many other things have changed. The predominant tone of the occasion is still one of childlike excitement. Most of them are out toward the edge of their seats. There is even a little racing up and down the aisles and climbing over the seats to make it seem more like the old days. The audience in their seats are completely lost in the picture. Their faces brighten and darken with the changing moods of the film and vocal indications of anxiety are again heard when the hero is threatened. Courageous action is applauded by larger hands but just as enthusiastically. The movie once more becomes a live place.

A few things have changed. They're not eating pop-corn any more. Lyons's chocolates seem to have taken that place. Then too, none of the kids used to smoke. Now, half of them smoke and the other half cough. There isn't any Charleston contest either. That was one of the high spots of the afternoon when the fresh little girl over on the next block won a bicycle.

Allowing for these few differences, the London audience of workers resembles in a striking manner those juvenile audiences of another day and place. It must be the lack of apparent sophistication characterising both of them which makes them seem so much alike. Both of them seem to lose all contact with the outside world when they come in to see a movie. Their reactions to what is placed before them are of the most elementary and unpretentious sort; they laugh hilariously at all the comic clichés and they are deeply moved by the ruthlessness of the stock villain; they relax when the heroine is rescued from disaster at a very late moment. They don't seem to be able to help giving themselves away like this.

American adult movie audiences are a good deal different from this. By the time individuals have come into a theatre and taken their seats they are swallowed up by the rest of the expressionless audience. Each one seems to have lost all distinguishing traits. He sits, for the most part, in stony unresponsiveness to the film. Changes in the fortunes of the hero work no changes on him. When he sees that justice has made a spectacular victory he doesn't even think of applauding. When the picture is over he gets up and leaves with the same dead-pan expression that he is apt to have retained all through the show.

THERE is one small group in America which retains some of the characteristics of the English working-class audience, but it is becoming affected by the stupefying influence which has made itself felt by most American audiences. Examples of this disappearing American type can be found especially in Middle-Western and Southern cities. These cities usually have a section devoted to the street sale of farm produce. The farmers from the area surrounding the city bring their goods in for sale and stay in the city all day. There are ordinarily several small movie houses near the markets and their audiences consist largely of farm-hands. A Western picture is almost always the rule. This agrarian audience seems to have definite ideas about what ought to happen in Western pictures. Shouts of disapproval, warning, derision, encouragement, and enthusiasm are delivered at appropriate times. But there isn't much moving around in the seats. Almost all the activity is vocal, coming from persons slouched down rather far in their seats. There is a complete absence of nervous tension but an observer still gets the feeling that the members of the audience are participating strenuously in the action of the picture. Their's is not quite the uninhibited kind of movie-watching that enlivens so many English cinemas.

From every point of view the English audiences are to be preferred. They carry the cinema's attempt to create an illusion of reality much closer to success. Seeing a film as a member of the sort of English audience that we have been talking about has a peculiarly vitalising effect. In fact, it can even make a mediocre film look pretty good. But this does not stop the audience from disapproving audibly of films or sequences which it thinks to be on the corny side. The mass of American audiences might profitably acquire this habit of vocal disapproval. The Bronx cheer is being woefully neglected in the general neighbourhood of its origin.

To-day in London the lousy guy isn't throwing the good guy down the mountain (to be continued next Saturday) but Basil Rathbone is beating hell out of little Freddie and half the audience seems to be on the verge of going up and hanging one on the big bully. It won't be Chapter VII of *Border Bandits* that we'll see next week but whatever it is there will be plenty of excitement in the stalls. For this preservation, in its pure form, of the art of watching a movie, England will receive the gratitude of millions of Americans. It's a great country where every night is Saturday afternoon.

# The Radio Records Life

## B.B.C.'s feature broadcasts need the reporter's approach and the artist's treatment

*says* E. A. HARDING

Chief Instructor, Staff Training Dept. at the B.B.C.

In the last twelve months there have been well over a hundred feature programmes broadcast nationally by the B.B.C. At least a dozen writers and producers are fully employed in editing, composing and presenting them. Even so, it is probably still necessary to define this type of programme before discussing it in a paper with a popular as well as a professional appeal.

It is often easier to give negative rather than positive definitions of compositions created for new media of communication, such as broadcasting or the cinema. Thus, by the process of elimination, a documentary film becomes a picture which is not obviously a drama, musical, newsreel or cartoon. Similarly, the radio feature becomes a programme which is not recognisably a play, talk, concert, variety entertainment, news bulletin or outside broadcast. It is true that some features verge on the play, while others are little more than talks. But most of them are distinct from either, inasmuch as they attempt to present life dramatically, in objective rather than subjective terms. In this respect they are "unpopular" in so far as the majority of listeners, like the majority of picture-goers, still prefer drama in the classical terms of a story with plot and characters, to a sequence of sound pictures illustrating, no matter how dramatically, an impersonal theme.

Nevertheless, there are two good reasons why features and documentaries should be growing in public appreciation. First, a technical reason: both exploit a fundamental characteristic of their respective media, namely the capacity to *record* life in a way that none of the older media, such as the theatre or print, have been able to do. Secondly, an historical reason: both tend to rely for their subject matter on the collective rather than the personal aspects of contemporary life. These are large claims, which are sadly belied by many of the feature programmes broadcast. But they are the chief factors which gave birth to features, and account ultimately for the relatively high output of them at the present time.

The development of feature programmes falls roughly into three periods, of which the third is not yet complete. The first from 1928 to 1932 was one of experiment, chiefly in forms. It was carried out by a small number of producers whom the B.B.C. encouraged to follow their inclinations. As might be expected, the results were highly individual in treatment and generally "literary" in subject matter. The early "mosaics"—pastiches of verse and music; radio fantasies such as *Yes and Back again;* anthology programmes such as *Chinese Moon Party* were typical products of this period, which had considerable aesthetic, but little popular, appeal. The phase might have lasted much longer than it did had it not been for the B.B.C.'s policy of commemorating public occasions with special programmes. As it was, feature producers were compelled to turn their attention to subjects suitable for treatment on popular occasions, in short popular subjects. Immediately two strands appeared in the development of feature programmes, the "literary" type were joined by what have since come to be known as the reconstructed actuality.

For a time both developed side by side. The public were treated to examples of one or the other according to the nature of the occasion. Thus, Armistice Day was commemorated with elaborate pastiche elegies, invocations and evocations, such as *In Memoriam* (1930, revived in 1937) and *Resurgam* (in 1932), while Empire Day and New Year's Eve provoked radio panoramas, posters in sound, sequences, etc., which culminated in the first great Empire hook-up *All the World Over*, broadcast on Christmas Day, 1932.

Up to this point, the development of these two types of feature had been fairly level and had been carried out for the most part by the same producers, Messrs. Gielgud, Sieveking and myself. Then, as often happens in the history of a mechanical medium, the introduction of a new technical device, namely, a suitable method of recording for broadcasting, and later the recording van, caused an upheaval, in which the romantic or literary feature and the realistic or actuality feature became divorced. Even the producers separated for a time into two camps. One group, the "journalists", represented by Laurence Gilliam and later by Larry Morrow, went hareing—in the recording van—after "actuality" at all costs; and produced a series of radio documentaries ranging from *Gale Warning* and *Scotland Yard* to *'Opping*

'*Oliday* and *Trinity House*. The other group, the "artists", represented by Felix Felton and D. G. Bridson, virtually "went North" and settled down to the production of large scale literary features ranging from radio biographies, such as *Coleridge* and *de Quincey* to the verse drama *The March of the* '45.

It must be understood that members of each group made excursions into the territory of the other; especially Felton, who has a long list of actuality shows to his credit. The point is that the technique of literary and actuality production had become separated to the detriment more particularly of the latter.

This, very roughly speaking, was the situation in 1936. It was not a very satisfactory one. The brilliant presentation of the literary features was a perpetual criticism of the feeble presentation of the actuality features, while the popular material of the actualities was a perpetual reminder of the restricted appeal of the literaries. It seemed necessary to reunite art and actuality in the way that art and reconstructed (studio) actuality had been united before the split.

The first step was taken in the *Harry Hopeful* programmes from the North. In these, "actuality", in the shape of shepherds, farmers, parsons and publicans, was brought into the studio and subjected to the rigours of strict "art" production. The result was astonishingly satisfactory. The programmes were praised both for their spontaneity and slickness, a significant combination, partly due, I suspect, to the temporary elimination of that "nigger in the woodpile", the recording van.

Since then the process of uniting art and actuality has gone on steadily, if with varying success. Recent examples have been: Gilliam's *Summer over London*, Bridson's *Steel*, Felton's *A Century of Steam*, Moray McLaren's *Dr. Johnson of Lichfield*, Francis Dillon's *Summer over the West*, John Gough's *Tobermory Treasure*, Rowland Hughes's *Summer over Wales* and *Roman Wall* by W. H. Auden and John Pudney. In all of these programmes, the tendency has been to use "actuality" as a unit of composition in formal structures of prose, verse and music, sometimes original, sometimes—to coin a word—pastiched. How the "actuality" is obtained, whether "live" in the studio or "potted" by the recording van, is becoming less important. What is important is that where the structure has grown out of the "actuality," the result is usually effective; where the "actuality" has been merely stuck on to the structure—to give it "reality", there is a sense of dislocation.

Listeners only enjoy recognising themselves—"actuality"—when they are interpreted with imaginative truth. The feature producer's problem this year, as all the time, is to achieve such interpretation with or without recording vans. What he requires is the reporter's approach to material and the artist's treatment of it.

*The picture at the head of this article shows the B.B.C. Recording Van at the Padstow May Day.*

# EXPERIMENTAL HOUR

## Val Gielgud's feature criticised by George Audit

VAL GIELGUD'S Experimental Hour is an established feature in radio programmes. It has now given us a dramatised version of *The Waste Land*, and two items from the Columbia Workshop of America, McLeish's *Fall of the City* and *St. Louis Blues*. These programmes have more than justified their productions and I am still wondering why they were not broadcast sooner, in the ordinary programme schedules. Where, in fact, does the "experiment" come in?

When the series started up Mr. Gielgud told us to look out for items that might shock sensitive people, but that had, nevertheless, technical qualities to recommend them. He may have been saying that, just to entice the curious to listen to his programmes, for we have not yet heard anything to make anybody's ears burn.

It is in their shape and style that these experimental items are worth noticing. In *The Fall of the City* the scene is the Square in the city where the people have gathered to discuss the threatened arrival of a Dictator. The suggestion of a Greek city-state is emphasised by the arrival of runners who inform the crowd of the dictator's imminence, while orators, soldiers and senators harangue the people with conflicting advice. From a vantage point a commentator describes this scene to the microphone in colloquial verse. Climax comes with the arrival of the dictator who is described by the horrified commentator as clad in shining armour but with no face under the visor.

McLeish has put a modern political situation in an ancient setting, with classical unities of time and space, and described it in modern racy verse. Which just proves: that a political situation makes a good plot (good); that verse can provide a good medium for radio (known already from the success of Shakespeare and Bridson); and that most B.B.C. commentators are pretty tame compared with McLeish's (excellent).

In January Mr. Bridson produced *The Waste Land*. The poet's voice and Tiresias's were spoken by Robert Farquharson. All the dialogue was given to suitable voices. Music was specially written for preludes and linking passages. There was restrained use of wind and thunder effects. The pub scene "When Lil's husband got demobbed", and the clerk-typist seduction scene were perfect "radio". The "Mrs. Porter song" was put to the tune of the Charlie Chaplin original. A nightingale record accompanied the appropriate reference. The "Song of the Thames-daughters" was put to music and accompanied by a mandoline. In the last section, "What the Thunder Said", the words got all the effect themselves, and a little use of the echo-room was practically the only addition.

Before and after the performance Freddy Grisewood and Michael Roberts gave a sort of Clapham and Dwyer commentary on it. The idea was good but Roberts, who was supposed to be defending the production, was more interested in crabbing it by trifling criticisms. The real problem in producing any great poem as long as *The Waste Land* is the extreme concentration of meaning. Once you dramatise the thing your actors must speak the lines at the normal tempo associated with the character of the part, and that generally means racing over lines that a reader would want to dwell on. On the other hand, a dramatisation like Mr. Bridson's does help one to see the poem as a whole (and incidentally *The Waste Land* is a magnificent example of unity to those feature producers who have been criticised here and by their own listening panel for being "too scrappy and disjointed" in production). And the listener who has not got to fasten his eyes on to lines of type can give freer vent to his imagination.

Wondering whether I was alone in liking *The Waste Land* I called on half a dozen or more people in the poorer quarters of my town. From their comments I reproduce the following.

Housewife (young, elementary school education): I'd never heard of the play before but I liked it. I didn't understand it all and I didn't see much connection between some of the parts. But some of the voices were beautiful, especially the men's. There were some good descriptions of London. It sounded a very high type of poetry.

Platelayer (middle-aged): Well, frankly it didn't appeal to me very much although I don't profess to be much of a judge—of shows like that. My boy heard it and liked it. Seemed a bit depressing to me though I liked the bit in the pub.

Clerk (young): Yes, I liked *The Waste Land*. I had never read it before and haven't read any poetry since I left school. Of course there was quite a lot of it I didn't understand but I got the general sense of it. I thought the music helped it and the conversational pieces came over best. Considering there was no action I thought it came over very well.

I am told by scientists that the most important part of any experiment is the close study of its phenomena after it is completed and the drawing up of approximate conclusions. Mr. Gielgud seems to be killing his rabbit only to leave it lying unobserved until it rots. The least he can do is to invite listeners' criticisms and to announce the result of the enquiry as soon as possible after every programme. Last year's listening panel had to listen to forty-seven productions before the B.B.C. issued a short announcement on the general opinions.

The Columbia Workshop of Irving Reis has a better name. It suggests a place where you overhear plays in the making, where productions are pulled to pieces and put together again by unusual and daring experiments. I should like to hear from Mr. Gielgud's Hour an experiment in different speech forms. I should like some extracts from Joyce's *Ulysses*, an example of modern realism from Russia, and contrasted with this, some Pirandello. Why not give us something new in humour and more fantasy, which is peculiarly suited to the medium of radio?

IT certainly needed the viperish pen of Ben Hecht to show all the crazy comedies which way they ought to have been going. *Nothing Sacred* lives up to its title with savagery worthy of *Volpone*. It smacks the public's face with an ironical wet-fish which I am rather afraid the public may object to, especially as there is not a single character in the story (with the possible exception of the hero) who isn't a slug, or, as the drunken and dishonest doctor in the film puts it, "Even if the hand of God reached down into the mire it couldn't raise them to the lowest depths of degradation—No Sir! not by a million miles". Take first the brilliant and simple dirtiness of the story. A New York paper gets wind of a dear little girl at Warsaw, Vermont, who is dying of radium poisoning. The reporter they send persuades her to come and spend her last days being feted by New York as the World's Heroine, and although she has just been told that the whole thing was a false alarm, she accepts, and departs for the big city with her doctor. Then the ballyhoo, the slush, the personal appearance at the night-clubs (together with "Tootsies of all Nations" as advertised), the reporter's half-realisation of the unpleasantness of the whole affair (especially as he has fallen in love with her), the near discovery, the attempt at the fake suicide, the real exposure, and the final disappearance before the fake funeral organised by the paper.

It would be unfair to reveal any more of the gorgeous ramifications of the plot or the glitteringly successful gags which adorn every single scene in the film. It should be enough to say that the big moment is not the much advertised socking-match between March and Lombard; the big moment occurs every few seconds when another Hecht gag explodes rudely in your defenceless face. Savage, ironical, comic, witty, the film rushes along at full speed and never trips up at any point. If it is a triumph for Hecht it is also a triumph for William Wellman and for the entire cast, including March, Lombard, Winninger, Connolly, and the beautiful man who plays the tough newsboy with a brudder called Mo.

And finally, how gratifying it is to see Technicolour coming into its own. The garish hues emphasise very cunningly the poisonous unreality of the lower life of a great city; and it looks as though someone, having seen the point, arranged for certain emphasis in this direction. There are at any rate plenty of the sourest colour clashes which contrast with the fine shots of the stately sky-scrapers of New York from the air: they, it seems are pure and dignified; it is only the men who built them who are little and vain and silly—but also funny. Take a notebook with you, for you will want to remember a lot of the gags.

MANY of the critical boys (and girls) have been going on at Hitchcock for some years now with demands that he should take things more seriously, should use his undoubted talent in films which attack the more vital problems of British life, should concentrate less on the isolated incident and more on the complete and coherent scenario. Meantime Hitchcock has gaily produced *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, *The Secret Agent*, and *Sabotage*, the last-named being easily the best so far. So, putting aside the influential intervention of the 'Observer's' film critic, who (sez she) succeeded in preventing any repetition of scenes like those in *Sabotage* where the small boy is blown to bits in an omnibus, it would appear that Hitchcock intends to stay put. Why not? Why all this solicitude from the Higher Critics? Do they fuss themselves about the soul of a de Mille or a Lubitsch? Are there anguished bleatings over the *weltanschauung* of Tay Garnett or Leo McCarey?

No, Sir; not a word is heard until perchance a darling director produces a really bad film, and that is something Hitchcock has not done for at least four years. I suggest therefore that we should accept the Hitchcock *genre* for what it is, and criticise accordingly. True, his rating on the general roster of big names will probably suffer in the long run through his self-decided limitations of thought and script, and even to-day he should perhaps be rated a little below the angels (or dub him Lucifer if you will); but the fact remains that *Young and Innocent* offers more good clean fun and really refreshing entertainment than any film since Christmas.

The story is a useful string for the Hitchcock beads. A nice young man (Derrick de Marney—going to be a good screen actor) is accused falsely but on particularly nasty circumstantial evidence, of murder. He gives the local police the slip, is befriended by the Chief Constable's adolescent daughter (Nova Pilbeam—good-looking, gauche and effective) and together they chase the countryside in search of a raincoat-belt—the only proof of innocence—with the police force in hot pursuit and the Chief Constable (Percy Marmont—bless him) worrying his head off at home. The chase leads through rustic England, onto railway sidings, to a tramp's doss-house, a lorry-driver's pull-in, an upper-class children's birthday party, the liverish horrors of a seaside hotel complete with tea-dance, and a deserted mine, where an aged Morris Cowley makes an impressive exit through an earth subsidence. There is also a dog.

There it is . . . rows and rows of neat little incidents, well-scripted, intelligently shot, smartly edited, and all rounded off in the best Hitchcock style. The female screams on the beach, and the seagulls whirl at us on her gesture. The discarded teacup punctures the Rolls. There is also a satisfactory attention to details of sound—intimate background noises which most directors never bother about, but which are worth their weight in gold. Plenty of humour, a certain amount of wit, and endless thrills. Exteriors present a sunny country or the menace of a rustic railway station at night. Interiors are convincing, ingenious and economically designed.

As a mystery story the thing is not very effective; in fact it seems doubtful whether the murder could have been committed at all under the circumstances established, and the appearance of the murderer as a drummer in a jazz-band seems a little arbitrary; so for that matter is the exceedingly trying truck-shot right across the room onto a close-up of his eyes, which discovers him for the audience, but not for the actors, and ruins the suspense values of the long scene which follows; after all, it's the last quarter of an hour of the film and we know he's got to be caught; and it's action we want, not the cat-and-mouse act. Still, one feels inclined to see the film a second time just for the fun of it, and to take a second look at some of the ingenuities, to say nothing of Hitchcock himself, who has given himself a much larger part than usual; he must be on the screen for fully thirty seconds.

# WHO CARES

**NOTHING SACRED, a United Artists Film, directed by William Wellman, with Carole Lombard, Fredric March, Charles Winninger, Walter Connolly, Sig Ruman, Frank Fay, and Maxie Rosenblum.**

**YOUNG AND INNOCENT, a Gaumont British film, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, with Nova Pilbeam, and Derrick de Marney.**

***Reviewed by Basil Wright***

# *I N Y W A Y ?*

**MANNEQUIN, a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film, directed by Frank Borzage, with Joan Crawford, Spencer Tracy, Alan Curtis, and Ralph Morgan.**

**THE BUCCANEER, a Paramount film, directed by Cecil B. de Mille, with Fredric March and Franciska Gaal.**

**THE AWFUL TRUTH, a Columbia film, directed by Leo McCarey, with Irene Dunne, Cary Grant, Ralph Bellamy, Robert Allen, Cecil Cunningham, and Alexander D'Arcy.**

***Reviewed by Marion Fraser***

*But tell me Mr. Slobberygub*
*Are you prepared to work for me?*

This is not the theme song of *Mannequin*, the new Joan Crawford picture, but it should be.

The film might have contributed towards the breaking down of stupid domestic traditions if it had remained logical. The tradition in question being the one about the woman's place in the home, men working and women weeping and such.

Joan starts off on the wrong foot by being the sole support of her family. Father and brother won't work. Mother has spent a life time trying to prove that the female is the weaker sex, but tells her daughter on the side that this is a lot of nonsense, for where has it got her? In concrete terms it has got her into a squalid apartment where she does the cooking (chiefly potatoes with the jackets off, for Paw likes them that way). Joan, however, is bemused by a handsome chap and wishes to marry him so that she may live in a more stylish way. She does so and finds herself supplying his bread ticket. This she is prepared to put up with for she is in love and also she is in possession of a more stylish apartment. But unfortunately the swine wants more than just a bread ticket and announces that she can use her good looks to provide the necessary extras. Joan is, of course, revolted and walks out. No more will she have to do with men. She will stand (emotionally and economically) on her own two feet.

Enter Spencer Tracy with all his toughness, but also a sad look on his face. He falls in love with the lady, and although she does not love him, the sad look is too much, and she marries him to get it off her mind. Incidentally, he is a rich man which is all to the good. He is decent too, and prepared to work. That makes it all logical. Or does it?

Tracy has aged a little in this picture and lost much of his bluster. The movies have decided to give him personal charm and ask him to exert it. This is a little disappointing for the Tracy fans, I am afraid. However, he is still good.

On the whole, *Mannequin* is not a bad shillingsworth for it gives you Crawford in all her glory—and a bathing costume. It takes you to London and Paris and a love-nest-for-two in Ould Ireland. And Spencer Tracy is in it which makes a lot of difference. But I am still afraid it is a very illogical film.

THE *Buccaneer* has Fredric March and the War of 1812 in it. It has hordes of buccaneers and the British marching into battle in a fog of gun smoke and also it has the scuttling of a ship and the spectacle of a little Dutch girl walking the plank. With all this it should be real Cecil B. de Mille, but unfortunately all these things do not hang very convincingly together. And either it is not good Cecil B. or else we have become too sophisticated for him.

Among the buccaneers are many familiar figures we have seen gripping holsters in the bar-rooms of the Wild West. And, for the sake of these old friends and the grand tradition of scoundrels, it is worth going to the Carlton. Fredric March does another Bothwell-in-kilts act, and gives the impression of being well upholstered by the property department. He works very hard, but he does not make a good Victor McLaglen.

There are several sequences in the film that strike the de Mille note, the best of them when the British attack General Jackson's army and get quietly and tidily mown down. The scenes are reminiscent of old military prints and make war look like the dignified affair history books tell of. There is also the sequence when the buccaneers on their private island, are attacked by a Southern ship and the cannon-shot hits boats and water and men, and Fredric March rushes down the beach clutching an American flag bawling "We are your friends. Do not shoot", over and over again, while the guns make an infernal noise and the ship is too far away in any case for his shouting to be heard. This scene is Cecil de Mille doing his big stuff and he might have gotten away with it if Fredric March had been a bit huskier and a lot more oafish-looking than he is.

Be prepared, however, for Franciska Gaal. Please remember Lillian Gish and all the sweet silly heroines we accepted for the love interest. And don't judge too harshly. Franciska is the little heroine who sticks by the buccaneers and sews buttons on their shirts and follows them to war riding on a gun in an officer's uniform, much, much too big for her. She is a vivacious little thing with cunning, mischievous, little ways. Only she's grown up and says so, mind you, in just the so many ways that you have observed a million times in the movies. And this time it makes you sick at the stummick too.

HOLLYWOOD has developed the art of the domestic comedy to a high state of perfection. This type has its origin in slapstick but the weapons are words, not custard pies. They take a good deal of clever acting and clever direction and although they are unpretentious, to my mind they top most other Hollywood product bar Disney.

The latest is *The Awful Truth* with Irene Dunne and Cary Grant and, more important, directed by Leo McCarey. The plot is nothing and the situations are banal. It follows the course, quarrel, divorce, reconciliation. But among the ingredients the raising powder is the important thing and out of the oven comes a frothy bit of stuff that leaves no taste in the mouth and is easy on the stomach.

Irene Dunne has taken on a mantle similar to Myrna Loy's but Cary Grant is a new person altogether. He manages to be sophisticated, jealous, in love and a likeable clown all at the same time. He gets away with situations that have been played a hundred times and gives them the freshness of novelty.

The moral to this tale is that it seems the plot is not the important thing, it is the treatment, the twist or maybe just that the director and the players feel the same way about a script and the camera catches on. It is certainly not just luck for it has happened a number of times the past two years.

These films are not important but I think they are the sort of thing we go to the movies hoping to see. They offer a vision of release from the daily round and tempt one to believe that frivolity, zest, fun and clever repartee can be the body of life as it is lived (we hope).

*Mr. John Grierson will resume his monthly reviews of new films in the next number of World Film News.*

# The MONTH'S RELEASES

Among the films released for showing in the provinces and suburbs, two are of especial merit: *Stage Door*, with Katharine Hepburn, Ginger Rogers and Adolphe Menjou, and *The Toast of New York*, with Cary Grant, Edward Arnold and Frances Farmer.

*Stage Door* is set in a New York theatrical boarding-house for girls, and succeeds in conveying something of the disappointments and struggles of these girls, and the tough, wise-cracking defences they erect to conceal the hardness of their struggles. Hepburn has the great acting part, but it is Ginger Rogers who carries off the acting honours with a surprisingly good performance. Adolphe Menjou turns out an amusing performance as the hard-boiled theatrical producer. Capably directed, with slick dialogue and good acting.

*The Toast of New York* is a fictionised version of the life and times of Jim Fisk, a notorious stock promoter. It glimpses the dramatic struggle between three of the strongest individual figures that ever aspired to leadership of the American financial scene—Daniel Drew, Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt and Jim Fisk. A vigorous,

*"Ginger Rogers . . carries off the honours"*

and at times exciting, panorama of incident and crisis with a fine performance by Edward Arnold in the role of Jim Fisk.

The two comedy releases of the month—*The Awful Truth*, with Cary Grant and Irene Dunne, and *Ali Baba Goes to Town* with Eddie Cantor, are dealt with more fully on other pages in this issue. In spite of the attempted satire in the latter film, which fails and which in any case is of little interest to British audiences, there are some good numbers and enough of the old Eddie Cantor to make this worth the seeing.

100 *Men and a Girl* has been so highly praised by all the critics and achieved such a long West End run that it is hardly necessary to list its outstanding qualities. The hundred men are unemployed symphony orchestra musicians whom Miss Durbin organises and manages. To get a contract the orchestra needs a big-name conductor and Miss Durbin goes after and gets Stokowski. The film has attracted great interest because of its able handling of the music scenes. The cast has Adolphe Menjou, Alice Brady and Eugene Pallette as well as the popular Deanna Durbin.

*The Prisoner of Zenda* is a new version of an old favourite, featuring Ronald Colman, Madeleine Carroll and Douglas Fairbanks junior. Those who remember its last film appearance in the old silent days will perhaps find this version a trifle disappointing: certainly it lacks something of the dash and vigour one has learnt to associate with the title-piece. Douglas Fairbanks celebrates his return to Hollywood with a first class piece of romantic villainy.

*Back in Circulation* is a fast-moving, fast-talking newspaper story, with a few fresh twists and turns, and a girl for the star-reporter. Good performances by Pat O'Brien and Joan Blondell and plenty of action and good, crackling dialogue make this a welcome addition to a long line of films about newspaper sensationalism. *Artists and Models* is an outstanding parade of music-hall talent, kept a little better in hand than usual, with plenty of comedy, spectacle and novelty and a cast that includes Martha Raye, Jack Benny, Richard Arlen and Ida Lupino.

Martha Raye also appears in the latest Bing Crosby film, *Double or Nothing*. Crosby's crooning is as pleasant as ever, but once again he carries a weak story, more noticeable than usual because he croons almost every time he appears. *The Bride Wore Red* is about a girl who sings for a living in an Italian waterfront café. To prove his point that one person is as good as another a Count installs her for two weeks at a high-class mountain resort, gives her good clothes and so on and introduces her to his friends. After an interval he exposes the girl, who is thrown over by the wealthy young man she has caught on to, and finally finds romance in the arms of the village postman. Amid the toils of this fantastic, footling story Franchot Tone, Joan Crawford, Robert Young and Reginald Owen try hard to make the whole thing seem credible and worth while.

Among the releases likely to be included as second features and worth noting are: *Charlie Chan on Broadway*, the latest and one of the best of the Chinese sleuth series, full of the light and heavy comedy and the spurts of action for which this series is justly famed; *Brief Ecstasy*, with Paul Lukas; *The Man Who Cried Wolf*, with Lewis Stone; and, on the lighter side, *Big Shot*, with Guy Kibbee; and *You Live and Learn*, with Glenda Farrell.

*"A first class romantic villain"*

**Stage Door** (RKO-Radio)
*DIRECTOR:* Gregory La Cava
*STARRING:* Katharine Hepburn, Ginger Rogers, Adolphe Menjou

**Toast of New York** (RKO-Radio)
*DIRECTOR:* Rowland V. Lee
*STARRING:* Edward Arnold, Cary Grant, Frances Farmer

**The Awful Truth** (Columbia)
*DIRECTOR:* Leo McCarey
*STARRING:* Irene Dunne, Cary Grant, Ralph Bellamy

**Ali Baba Goes to Town** (20th Century-Fox)
*DIRECTOR:* David Butler
*STARRING:* Eddie Cantor, Roland Young, June Lang

**100 Men and a Girl** (Universal)
*DIRECTOR:* Henry Koster
*STARRING:* Deanna Durbin, Adolphe Menjou, Eugene Pallette

**The Prisoner of Zenda** (United Artists)
*DIRECTOR:* John Cromwell
*STARRING:* Ronald Colman, Madeleine Carroll, Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.

**Back in Circulation** (Warner Bros.)
*DIRECTOR:* Ray Enright
*STARRING:* Pat O'Brien, Joan Blondell, Margaret Lindsay

**Artists and Models** (Paramount)
*DIRECTOR:* Raoul Walsh
*STARRING:* Jack Benny, Ida Lupino

**The Bride Wore Red** (M.G.M.)
*DIRECTOR:* Dorothy Arzner
*STARRING:* Joan Crawford, Franchot Tone, Robert Young

**Charlie Chan on Broadway** (20th Century-Fox)
*DIRECTOR:* Eugene Forde
*STARRING:* Warner Oland, Keye Luke, Joan Marsh

**Brief Ecstasy** (A.B.F.D.)
*DIRECTOR:* Edmond Greville
*STARRING:* Paul Lukas, Linden Travers

**You Live and Learn** (Warner Bros.)
*DIRECTOR:* Arthur Woods
*STARRING:* Glenda Farrell, Claude Hulbert

**Double or Nothing** (Paramount)
*DIRECTOR:* Theodore Reed
*STARRING:* Bing Crosby, Martha Raye, Andy Divine, Mary Carlisle

*Note: "The Life of Emile Zola" and "They Won't Forget" originally announced for February release are now scheduled for release early this month. These, the two outstanding films of 1937, should on no account be missed by any of our readers.*

# ALI BABA Goes to TOWN

***Eddie Cantor would like to be taken seriously but just pretend you don't hear him when he talks that way and maybe he'll get over it.***

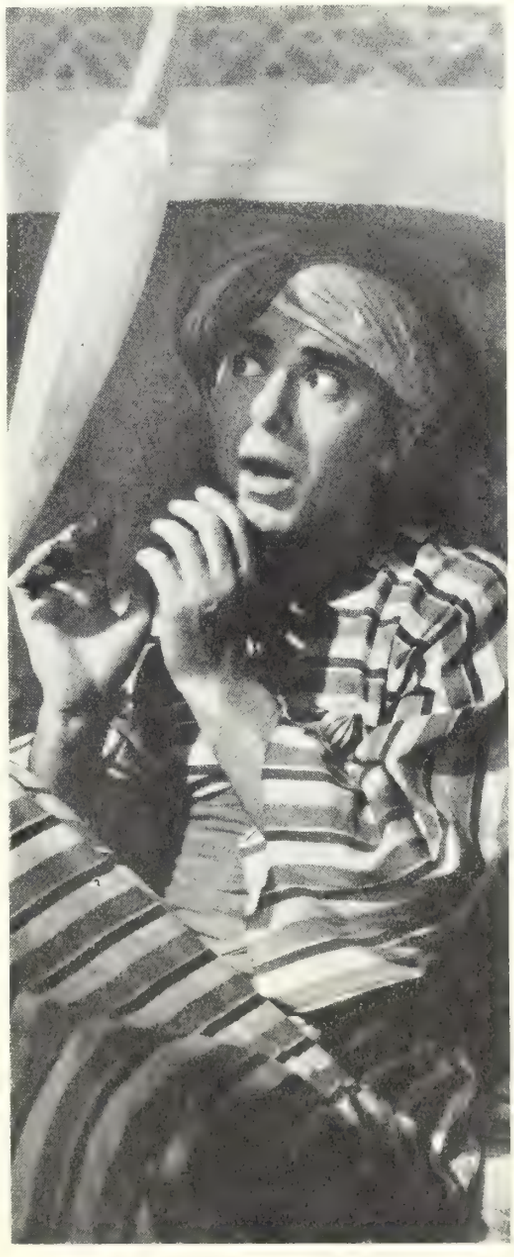
PARADING Mr. Roosevelt's economic sure-cures through a crazy Arabian Nights' land sounds like a great idea for rich movie satire, but it never had a chance. The plan of satire, by which Eddie Cantor and Twentieth Century-Fox, who made *Ali Baba Goes to Town*, hoped to reach new heights of barbed hilarity, was to drop a funny little man into the middle of a strange community, which was labouring over familiar problems in its own peculiar way. The little man would tell them that they ought to look to Mr. Roosevelt's methods for a solution of their social and economic ills.

From there Twentieth Century-Fox *et al.* thought it would be easy. Just take an assortment of features of Mr. Roosevelt's plans and practices for revamping American capitalism —more equitable distribution of wealth, a big programme of public works, jobs for all the unemployed, new sources of tax revenues— and put them into exaggerated and abbreviated operation in Eddie Cantor's Bagdad. These plans often look funny enough anyhow when just ripped out of their context, but set them in an exotic background and they ought to be uproarious. This is the goal which seems to have been set for the satirical portions of *Ali Baba Goes to Town*.

The nervousness of the American movie manufacturers over the possibility of Mr. Roosevelt's turning on them next in his fitful anti-monopoly drive might have had something to do with their failure to achieve the goal they set for themselves. But it would be a mistake to blame the class struggle or any aspect of it for the failure of *Ali Baba Goes to Town* to achieve the satiric heights which the idea behind it promises. It is much more likely a case of a good idea having got into mediocre hands.

When Eddie Cantor was working for Florenz Ziegfeld as the funny little sort of nit-witted man who could put a song over wonderfully well and throw in some engaging steps, he occupied a very appropriate place in the American entertainment field. But when he started selling coffee on Sunday nights over a coast-to-coast hook-up, and began to think of himself as the people's pal, one who brought the serious happenings of the day to the firesides with a laugh, his limitations became too obvious. When he started singing his patter songs about nonsensical ways of curing the depression, they should have been funny, but they weren't. It was probably because a comedian or a writer has to be very good before he can make people laugh about their troubles. The voters can be made to laugh at the news but Eddie Cantor couldn't do it.

It seems that Cantor has never realized how far short he kept falling of being funny in his topical skits because he has carried his same abortive radio technique over to his latest film. When he takes the New Deal public works programme, the financial policy, the work relief programme, and other varied features and transplants them to what he calls Bagdad, the fun should begin. Certainly Mr. Roosevelt and his helpers have made enough mistakes in the last five years to serve as rich material for an explosive satire. But what happens? We are presented with a string of stale New Deal jokes that have been kicking around the variety stages for the last couple of years or have been appearing in various forms in the Republican press. It is true that the fellow who says them this time wears a turban but otherwise there isn't any difference in that "building the bridge in the wrong place" story. One shouldn't object just because stories are old, but it seems that stories should be selected that don't show the wear so badly.



*Ali Baba Goes to Town* (*20th Century Fox*)

IF this picture was really an attempt at satire, its main failure was that the story never got to the point where it could support itself. When the New Deal had been set down in Bagdad it should have been possible just to let things happen. But what you get instead is this string of stale gags that have already been objected to. One does not grow out of the other. There is the feeling that Cantor has been handed a gag and a couple of hundred feet of film to get the audience in stitches over it. His eyes, his hands, and his tone of voice are all up there trying to extract a community guffaw at something that falls far short of the histrionic effort put into it. When one gag is finished another soon appears. The process is repeated with quite unconvincing results. The plan of letting the story go a little way, and then turning on the "satire", seems to have been followed.

Eddie Cantor and his friends must have thought that they could do a satire of the New Deal without stepping on anyone's toes. All they actually did was make a few feeble jabs at spots that are rather unimportant and which are now in the public fatigue zone. The result of this from the point of view of satire is something very anæmic and something which would have no effect on the blood-pressure of the most ardent Jacksonian Democrat. For the benefit of any who might have wondered, it should be stated that America has not at this time added to the Swift, Voltaire, Gilbert list. There may still be hope, but not from the little man with the banjo eyes.

What one really hopes, of course, is that the film never was intended as a satire. It is plain that it wasn't constructed with only that thwarted end in mind. Mr. Zanuck or somebody was going to be perfectly sure that the film would not stray far from the tried and true Hollywood prescription for success. So we find plenty of singing and dancing running through the film, and, incidentally, as nice a version of "Twilight in Turkey" as you are apt to stumble on in several days' travel. There is a rhythmic negro trio and a tap dancer who would stand out in any crowd.

The whole film is so good natured that you have to acknowledge a certain enjoyment after having seen it. It's the old Hollywood buckshot technique and it seems to have worked satisfactorily again. Sell it as a New Deal satire and grab plenty of publicity in the Republican press; give them some good old Eddie Cantor personality; throw in a beautiful tenor and a blonde; and fill up the rest with songs and dances.

Eddie Cantor would like very much to be taken seriously, but just pretend you don't hear him when he talks that way, and maybe he'll get over it.

# REVIEW OF REVIEWS

Edited by

## H. E. BLYTH

### *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*

(Walt Disney—R.K.O. Radio)

The question which everybody must have asked in advance about Walt Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was whether it would justify its length. Not only was the film to be many times longer than anything Mr. Disney had done; it was to tell a story which he could be imagined as telling in the accustomed time. A fairy tale like an anecdote is by definition brief, and its form helps its content to be credible. We can believe three things that are done in three paragraphs when one of them alone, drawn out to epic length, would be preposterous. The question then was whether Mr. Disney had lost any of his secrets by abandoning his form.

The fact that everybody likes *Snow White* is not necessarily an answer, though it has its importance. Thousands are trampling one another to see it; but the question still is whether the good thing they are there to see could possibly be better. I am not sure that it could, and yet in view of the future which the film opens up I am sure that the matter should be argued. Mr. Disney has both expanded his story and contracted it. He has added animals; he has differentiated and named the dwarfs; and he has elaborated the wicked stepmother in her role as magician, giving her a laboratory with monster retorts and a long-legged raven to scowl in the corner. On the other hand he has suppressed two of her attempts on Snow White's life—the tight lacing and the poisoned comb—and he has stopped short of Snow White's wedding. The wedding is perhaps not missed, but my guess is that the queen should have had more things to do and less time in which to do them. She was the only one of Mr. Disney's creatures who even approached being tiresome.

Mr. Disney's other developments are all to the good, and indescribably delightful. The animals, for instance—I can remember no finer moment in any film than this one when at sunrise in the forest the banks of eyes which have looked so sinister all night turn out to belong to rabbits, fawns, chipmunks, bluebirds, and turtles. The transition is from shadowy evil to the clearest and most blithesome benevolence. The antics of these charming beasts vary henceforth between the beatific and the absurd; the pride of the baby bluebird in his voice, the ticklish turtle offering his belly for a washboard when Snow White starts housecleaning for the dwarfs, and the squirrels undoing cobwebs with their tails are but understatements of the very touching love for Snow White which they share with a helpless audience. Then there are the dwarfs—in their seven foolish ways as irresistible as the heroine, and of course no less devoted to her than the animals are; though one of them, Grumpy, remains a misogynist almost to the end. Mr. Disney's triumph with them, like all his other triumphs, is one of understanding. His technique, about which I know little, must of course be wonderful; but the main thing is that he lives somewhere near the human centre and knows innumerable truths that cannot be taught. That is why his ideas look like inspirations, and why he can be good-hearted without being sentimental, can be ridiculous without being fatuous. With him, as with any first-rate artist, we feel that we are in good hands; we can trust him with our hearts and wits.

—Mark Van Doren, *The Nation*

**Wallace Beery and Dennis O'Keefe**

### *The Bad Man of Brimstone*

(J. Walter Ruben—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.) Wallace Beery, Dennis O'Keefe, Virginia Bruce.

Mr. Wallace Beery here represents, with his usual accomplished ferocity, an unspeakably bad man of the Wild West. There is no kind of robbery or murder that he will not commit, and what is worse, and surely contrary to the tradition of Wild Western stories, he is altogether lacking in the spirit of sportsmanship; when the young hero points a gun at him he suggests that it is more honourable to use fists, and then himself draws two pistols. But it will be no surprise to the student of American fiction to learn that throughout the film he is constantly in tears, and that he meets his appointed end with all the ecstasy that is expected of martyrs. Finding his long-lost son, he follows him about with dog-like affection, helping him by stealth and grateful for the smallest recognition in return. Since the young man has all the sentiments proper to a hero and turns both policeman and lawyer in an attempt to bring law and order to the West, the situation is rather amusing, and, indeed, the whole film has a certain ironic detachment which makes it possible to enjoy even its most preposterous episodes. The film is burlesque melodrama, but the burlesque is an unscrupulous method of making the melodrama palatable to modern tastes.

—*The Times*

I always enjoy Wallace Beery. He plays bad men so well and enjoys himself so hugely in his wicked ways. No one can shoot to kill with such gusto or with such a beatific smile. When, in *The Bad Man of Brimstone* he finds himself faced with his own son, whom he deserted as an infant, and who has been brought up in God-fearing fashion by his sainted mother, ignorant of his father's identity, when he is hunted by that son exercising his official duty as Federal Marshal, you can imagine the western complications that ensue. What more can the film-goer who loves saloons and triggers, bandits and hold-ups, and the reform of the community wish for in a picture?

—Sydney W. Carroll, *The Sunday Times*

*Critical Summary.*

*In spite of some critics' regrets that "The Bad Man of Brimstone" was not filmed on the playing fields of Eton, and that Wallace Beery does not play a straight bat, we judge this action-filled western to be a good picture. It is, in fact, in direct line with the westerns of Bill Hart's kind and day, and provides more satisfying and enjoyable entertainment than the whole pack of recent indoor inconsequentials.*

## Rosalie

(W. S. Van Dyke—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.) Eleanor Powell, Nelson Eddy.

These two-hour musical confections are a little overlong for my personal palate. Their redemption is gorgeous staging. An American Army cadet, in Mr. Eddy's fine vocal person, flies the Atlantic from the football field to woo Miss Powell, who, with her tap-dancing genius, is princess of a mythical royal house. (They all pronounce it "princis".) Most of the story is sheer padding, and I listened patiently but vainly for a witty line. Laughter is exclusively provided by Frank Morgan's always acceptable incoherence as a nervous monarch. An official comedian, Ray Bolger, struck me as dismally unfunny. Garnished with music by Cole Porter, Tchaikovsky and Sousa, the picture has numerous mass human formations, with a local fiesta on a scale to make Ziegfeld swoon.

—P. L. Mannock, *The Daily Herald*

Deploying its formidable phalanxes of talent—stars, composers, set designers, dance directors, make-up people, script writers, dialogists, orchestras and chorus people—in one of the most pretentious demonstrations of sheer mass and weight since the last Navy games, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer brings forth nothing more impressive than another musical film called *Rosalie*. In it Eleanor Powell tap dances in black silk stockings among sets entirely divorced from reality, Nelson Eddy sings as well and as inopportunely as could be imagined, and expensive secondary people try to compensate with personal mannerisms for all the bright things the dialogue and action fail to say or do. All this is not to deny to *Rosalie* the purely economic distinction of being a great deal of show for the money; it is, in fact, too much show, except possibly for those who love sets and costumes, Mr. Eddy and Miss Powell for their own sweet sakes. In sheer length, breadth, weight and thickness, it is wearying, and even if all of it were good (which it isn't) still, there might be some point in protesting at such an unholy surfeit.

—B.R.C., *The New York Times*

*Critical Summary.*

*The move towards longer films, lasting two hours or more, which reached its climax with "The Great Ziegfeld", cannot be said to have been altogether successful. In the theatre there are intervals to allow a breathing space from concentration, but this is not so in the cinema, though one recalls that "David Copperfield" was shown in two parts during its first London run, and there have been other instances as well. A picture full of varied action and incident, such as "Mutiny on the Bounty", does not begin to pall after two hours, but a musical nearly always does, and it is significant that several long musicals have not been as successful as was confidently predicted—"The Firefly", for example, despite many excellent notices, did not prove the attraction that was expected, and this was almost certainly due to its length. Most significant move of all towards longer pictures is, of course, Walt Disney's, but Disney has always been a law unto himself.*

### W.F.N. Selection.

*Nothing Sacred* * *

*The Bad Man of Brimstone* *

*Something to Sing About* *

*La Belle Equipe* *

### *Other Films covered in this Issue*

*The Buccaneer*

*Mannequin*

*The Awful Truth*

*Young and Innocent*

*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*
(Stars reserved)

*Dinner at the Ritz*

*Rosalie*

*Man Proof*

*Tovarich*

*Every Day's a Holiday*

*Young Pushkin*

## Man Proof

(Richard Thorpe—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer.) Myrna Loy, Rosalind Russell, Franchot Tone.

Everybody is handsome, beautiful, and well-dressed, if not quite bright, in *Man Proof*. The talk is all of love, love, love. Nothing new is revealed, however. The ladies here don't go in for poetry. They are the brisk, fashionable species, and express sorrow simply by passing out at bars. Myrna Loy and Rosalind Russell are busy with an exhibition of such passions as jealousy, disillusionment, triumph, and awakening of love, as one might expect in a story that has delighted readers of the "Ladies' Home Journal". Scenes include a wedding, a prize fight, a newspaper office, those bars, of course, suburban cottages, and costly apartments. Walter Pidgeon and Franchot Tone have a good deal to say themselves throughout, but the ladies seemed to me the best of the talkers. Tireless heroines, each with a nobility of motive that is impressive.

—John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

Four authors were concerned in this story, which suggests that they were in hopes of achieving an effect of some sort that has eluded them. So imposing a parade of stars can hardly have been intended to convey so little. The affair has a certain slickness but, as none of the characters is worth a serious thought, even these star performers have to exercise all their quality to keep one's interest alive. Some of the dialogue is smart, though it runs over-much along the talking in images groove. Still, Miss Loy, tight and sober, Miss Russell, happy and broken-hearted, Mr. Tone, terse but faithful, and Mr. Pidgeon, good-looking but shallow, afford in combination a tolerable flow of rippling entertainment.

—A. T. Borthwick, *The News Chronicle*

*Critical Summary.*

*Hollywood's bright young things have always been a trial on the screen, but when they become introspective and philosophical, and throw off airy generalisations on Life and Love, the wise man reaches for his hat and looks for the nearest exit—or preferably the bar. The screen adaption of "Man Proof" appears to have been the result of communal effort, and this we may readily believe since it is hard to imagine that any one man could have contrived so circular an effort, for dialogue and situation revolve like a puppy chasing its tail.*

## Tovarich

(Anatol Litvak—Warner Brothers.) Claudette Colbert, Charles Boyer, Melville Cooper, Isobel Jeans, Basil Rathbone, Anita Louise.

Gay, sparkling, and tender, this has more than enough brilliance to over-ride that American accent that creeps in here and there.

If I say it is full of charm I don't want you to think I imply anything precious or sugary. Its post-revolution topsy-turvydoms are the sort of things that might have happened, and here they are presented so persuasively that for the time being you laugh and glow comfortably in the feeling that they really did.

Warner Brothers paid £35,000 for the film rights of this play. They have afforded it some fine settings (including one that is said to have cost £25,000 to build), but the price has not intimidated them into overcharging its atmosphere. *Tovarich* is a thoroughly enjoyable show.

—A. T. Borthwick, *The News Chronicle*

I have a suspicion that *Tovarich*, poor comrade, is getting weaker minute by minute. The play in town was nice, but one did hear a great deal about how it had been abroad, and now the movie comes, and it hardly amounts to much more than a mere show for Claudette Colbert. That is being a little mean, for Miss Colbert has her own way with her, though it's not much the way a Russian princess who had been ukased out of house and home; and Charles Boyer ambles through it in a fair temper; and Basil Rathbone adds a nice note. The comedy, however, of Russian royalties glad to get a job as servants in a Paris household is clearly Americanised into simple homespun humour such as we all grew up with.

—John Mosher, *The New Yorker*

## Young and Innocent

(Alfred Hitchcock—Gaumont British.)
Nova Pilbeam, Derrick de Marney.

For the first time in one of his pictures, the crime is secondary to a warm human interest. It's melodrama, but somehow cosy, too. Hitchcock himself blames me for his change of heart. He was pained, it seems, by my comments on his last picture, *Sabotage*, in which he blew up a schoolboy in a bus, with a time bomb.

If he likes to attribute *Young and Innocent* to me, he may, and I shall be delighted. For I like it best of all his pictures. It may not be, academically speaking, the cleverest. The adepts who go to a Hitchcock film to grub out bits of montage may be disappointed. Except for a few neat little things, it is not what I should call a tricksy picture. There is no sequence in it so memorable as the knife scene in *Blackmail*, or the bit with Peter Lorre's death in *The Man Who Knew Too Much*. But it is exciting, and ingenious enough to satisfy any normally intelligent person, and it has something which I have missed so far from all the brilliant row of Hitchcock's pictures, and that is humanity.

The real charm of the film is its eye for human values. Hitchcock seems to know, with a certainty that has sometimes evaded him, what is important and what is immaterial to a person in certain circumstances, just how far emotion can affect behaviour, just the look or the word or the withdrawal that can send bonnets flying over the windmill.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

One of the many things I like about Alfred Hitchcock's work is its efficient modesty, its lack of strain or over-statement. It is common in films to try to give every picture an air of greatness. Now this is neither possible, truthful, nor desirable. Every time we sit down to read a book we don't expect a classic. We all like magazine stories. And Hitchcock never tries to pretend his short story is a "Gone With the Wind". If you like a film that has a beginning, a middle, and an end, that is shaped like a piece of carving and has the clean economical lines of a sculpture, you will relish every minute of *Young and Innocent*. Even if you don't care much about such things and just want to be thrilled, amused, stimulated, and always held, you are bound to like it, too.

—Stephen Watts, *The Sunday Express*

*Critical Summary.*

*A prominent American critic wrote recently that he and many others considered Alfred Hitchcock to be the best living director, and that is a notable compliment indeed. Apart from his wonderful flare for creating and maintaining suspense and his masterful eye for detail, Hitchcock is unique amongst British directors, because he has a genuine understanding of the man in the street—him to whom a famous judge once referred as "the man on the Clapham omnibus". Too many English directors seem never to have travelled on the Clapham omnibus, or, if they have, they are now doing their utmost to forget this unfortunate contact with the proletariat.*

## Something to Sing About

(Victor Schertzinger—Grand National).

Because James Cagney is in it, *Something to Sing About has* something to sing about.

Cagney, in my opinion, is one of the few, perhaps half a dozen, real screen artists of America. He will never, I am sure, be a popular darling. He has no striking charms. He has grace, but it is invested in a short, stocky figure. He has humour, but his face is square and homely. He has a curious delicacy, almost a refinement, of gesture, but his parts call mainly for fighting and slugging. He is too small for authority, too tough for sympathy, and too honest for heroics. He's just an actor. Like Spencer Tracy and Gary Cooper, and few other men that I know on the American screen, he can incarnate a human being straight, without "character", without make-up, and without mugging.

In the present film he plays a danceband leader who goes to Hollywood to become a film star. He becomes a film star. He doesn't like it. Who, with wit, would? He flies back to New York, and takes up his old job as band leader. That, oddly enough, seems to satisfy him. The film suffers from an underplus of Cagney. What Cagney there is, is fine.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

Not much to write home about. Without James Cagney, perky and versatile as a dance band leader who goes to Hollywood, it would be pretty poor stuff.

Some of the burlesques of filmland's "grooming" are fun.

A bogus story of his marriage, put out for publicity purposes, causes the most mechanical lovers' misunderstanding I have seen for years. Happily, Cagney carries everything. He is a great little artist, and I am glad he is returning to the fold of Warner Brothers with the prospect of better pictures than this.



—P. L. Mannock, *Daily Herald*

*Critical Summary.*

*A second-rate film, with an undistinguished story, that is saved by a delightful performance by Cagney. His artistry was never more evident than in this film, for the whole film depends on it, and he gives as delightful a piece of fooling as we are likely to see for a long time. His dancing can only be described as an Astaire number done in the style of the sixpenny hop, a jeering, good-natured parody that is better than the best dancing. One number, with a tramp steamer for a setting and the crew for a dance team and band, is a great knockabout version of the Astaire performance in "Follow the Fleet" with a slapstick finish that rounds it off perfectly. A star for James Cagney's performance.*

## Every Day's a Holiday

(Edward Sutherland—Paramount.)
Mae West, Edmund Lowe, Charles Butterworth, Charles Winninger, Walter Catlett.

The title might almost be a forecast of Miss West's screen future, if this is the best she can do. The film, in which the woman with the swinging hips is a sort of crook (an incredible sort), is rather on the dull side. It is set in the beginning of the century (as old fashioned as Mae's curves), so that all the characters perambulate in quaint clothes that have no place in entertainment now except burlesque. The story is even more upholstered than the costumes of the period. It is, in fact, a kind of padded cell. Incidentally, Miss West has given up her innuendoes and has almost run out of wisecracks. The few she has fizzle like damp squibs.

—Richard Haestier, *The Star*

*Critical Summary.*

*It seems only yesterday that we first encountered Mae West, swaggering into a night-club in a George Raft picture while the cloak-room attendant's eyes grew wide with wonder. Looking back now, it seems strange that this plump little woman with the ample curves should have thus triumphed in a stream-lined age; perhaps the more elderly filmgoers saw in her the last of the dying tradition of the Victorian Music Hall. But the novelty has worn off, and the Hays organisation has done the rest.*

*Cagney dances in "Something to Sing About"*

## *Dinner at the Ritz*

(Harold D. Schuster—New World.)
Annabella, Paul Lukas, David Niven, Romney Brent, Stewart Rome, Francis L. Sullivan.

Annabella has gone to Hollywood to play opposite William Powell and her last British-made film, *Dinner at the Ritz*, is, I think, the best of the three she has done for New World. This is a light comedy with occasional thrills provided by Paul Lukas, as a gunman baron, and Francis L. Sullivan as the head crook. Annabella is the daughter of a Paris banker who gets shot as the solvency of his bank is threatened. His blonde daughter vows to track down the murderer and so she puts on a black wig and goes to Monte Carlo, where she gets employed as a jewellery saleswoman. The long and eventful chase ends at the Ritz with honour satisfied and romance in the air. The formula of *Dinner at the Ritz* has been used before, but there is enough originality in the telling to make it pleasant entertainment.

—Ian Coster, *The Evening Standard*

A well-bred little melodrama, mannerly and subdued, *Dinner at the Ritz* deserves at least your polite attention—by which we mean that you should not yawn too openly if you must yawn at all. Produced by Twentieth Century-Fox's British subsidiary, New World studios, it moves with Old World decorum and occasional touches of gout. Yet it has its virtues, and a polite decision would be that it is, on the whole, a rather agreeable entertainment in its quiet British way. Having the sort of muddling-through narrative that does not reduce easily, we had best let the plot go as a multi-angled campaign against a nefarious French capitalist (Francis L. Sullivan).

If you can picture Mr. Lukas playing a gunman, you can imagine how proper and stately the really nice people in the cast must be. Annabella, it is true, is a bit livelier than the rest, but we do wish she had not let herself be inveigled into that brunette wig for her masquerade as a Spanish marchesa. She looked—and it hurts to say this—like a dowdy Dolores del Rio. Mr. Sullivan, we might add, gets his just desserts and takes them as philosophically as the cast must have taken its tea every afternoon at 4, while the picture was being made. There was actually one scene where we thought we detected a crumpet crumb on Mr. Niven's collar.

—Frank S. Nugent, *The New York Times*

## *Nothing Sacred*

(William Wellman—United Artists.)
Fredric March, Carole Lombard.)

People who can contemplate without turning a hair the most agonising scenes of sporting or military cruelty are protesting right and left at the savage irreverence of *Nothing Sacred:* it makes fun, they say, of death. It does no such thing: it ridicules the exploitation of morbid sentimentality. I wonder what the objectors to *Nothing Sacred* would make of *Volpone:* there is more than a slight resemblance between the scarifying play at the Westminster and the scarifying movie at the Pavilion. Volpone, feigning illness, is encircled by a mob of avaricious toadies. Hazel Flagg, supposed to be dying from radium poisoning, is instantly pounced upon by the gutter press: "What is that girl thinking? What is she feeling? A million readers will want to know." A reporter, like a carrion crow, tracks her down in an uncivilised outpost of New England and transports her to New York, where she is to be the centre of a gigantic publicity stunt—official welcome from the Mayor, freedom of the city, a slap-up time while she lasts, a slap-up funeral when she gives out. If the girl were really dying, there would be some reason for squeamishness; but we are told at the outset that there is nothing whatever wrong with her: she only accepts the rôle of doomed heroine because she would do anything to escape from her dead-alive home.

This admirable comic situation is developed with verve, resource and irony. O rare Ben Hecht! He has done brilliant work for the cinema before, but he never struck a richer vein than this. *Nothing Sacred* contains a succession of acidly satirical sketches: the all-in wrestling match at which the announcer, discovering Hazel Flagg's presence, asks the audience to observe ten seconds silence, while the spotlight is trained on her and the cameras flash; the raucous chorus of hideous children who salute her at dawn with doggerel verse to the tune of "John Brown's Body"; the spectacular cabaret show, with its pageant of Mounted Heroines of History (Catherine the Great, Lady Godiva, Pocahontas) culminating in the personal appearance of the "greatest little heroine of all time." The little heroine, thoroughly enjoying herself and overdoing the champagne, passes out, and the sensation is redoubled: Death (the gloating crowd supposes) is approaching to claim his Helpless Victim; who knows, perhaps they have had the luck to be in at the kill.

The direction of William Wellman translates Hecht's script into excellent cinema, and the acting is superb. Carole Lombard has a touch of comic genius, and Fredric March's reporter is authentic. As the editor, Walter Connolly's mean look and explosive manner are magnificent: it is a joy to watch his distress when Hazel shows no signs of getting worse, his simmering wrath when the doctors pronounce her quite healthy, his pious gratitude when he hears she has pneumonia. There is certainly something Jonsonian about this actor. The ending hardly equals the rest of the film: of course, the reporter falls in love with the girl. Ideally, she should have repulsed and disowned him; it would have been pleasant to see the hard-bitten news-hound gradually turning soft as butter before the charm and (supposed) courage of the girl, while the influence of New York made her steadily nastier and tougher. Instead we were treated to scenes of knockabout bedroom fisticuffs between the pair, pandering, I suppose, to a universal but suppressed desire among males to knock the female out. And why was there no funeral? But I don't grumble; it will be a long time, I fear, before we see another film so adult and so diverting.

—Peter Galway, *New Statesman*

## *La Belle Équipe*

(Julien Duvivier—French.)
Jean Gabin, Charles Vanel, Vivianne Romance, Micheline Chirei.

*La Belle Équipe* is a Duvivier film, and that is equivalent these days to saying a Van Gogh or a Gauguin. It isn't quite an authentic Duvivier, because somebody, for reasons best known to himself, has seen fit to insist on a happy ending. The original film, as the director conceived it, was the story of five good comrades who pooled their winnings in a lottery to build and equip a road-house by a river. They loved it, they worked for it, but fate took them off, one after the other, like the ten little nigger boys, until the opening day found Chez Nous chez nobody. The tender heart of Somebody has shrunk from the last catastrophe. In the present version two of the brotherhood are left to join, with the ghosts of the others, in the inaugural celebrations. One doesn't believe it—the cards are stacked too obviously another way—but let's be sensible, one is moved by the film in spite of it. Right up to the final compromise the piece is so winningly, so cunningly, a bit of real Duvivier; by turns dramatic, tender, cynical, and just plain moving, so that it sneaks right into your heart and stays there. I suppose that is what happened to Somebody. Well, I don't altogether blame him. After ninety minutes of M. Jean Gabin's company I felt a sentimental urge myself to cheat the scenarist, and switch round the ending from tragedy to compromise, so that M. Gabin at least might get his modest dream, and live.

—C. A. Lejeune, *The Sunday Observer*

*Critical Summary.*

*This is the year of blessing for the French motion picture makers. They have hit their pace, lengthened their stride. They are turning out film of quality and quantity. While René Clair, most original of the Gallic film creators, makes an exile's compromises in England, a whole slew of directors, some talented in other directions, but most of them no match for René Clair, are finding capital, and a whole slew of producers are finding profits in native films. But I should make clear that there are few masterpieces here. There are no "Intersets"; if there is a "Lower Depths", it is matched by "Dead End". Actually, most French films are "good" because in technique and in simple entertainment value they have caught up with Hollywood. There are no subject cycles, as in the States. There is no farce cycle, no gangster cycle, no musical cycle at all. The French strive rather for variety in their films; this may be due to the production structure. Instead of a few huge companies, there are hosts of small producers, each trying to break through with something striking. The most important selling point about a French picture is not the star name but the ensemble idea of the production—the story and the director compete for first attention. Apart from Pagnol, no director seems to have a distinct genre. Though Duvivier, in an interview, said French films were really "much closer to the people" than were American films, and that he wished to occupy himself with social problems, I could find no example of that in his current films, and little of social content in all the current French films. There is one exception—Jean Renoir, who consistently makes important films of real social content; he may really give national expression, in cinema, to the French people.*

—Meyer Levin, *Esquire*

# COCKA

Written b

## FILM CRITIC PROBE

*W.F.N.'s* quest for the Average Film Critic has ended in a fiasco. We mean, we actually found one.

According to our analysis the A.F.C. stands four-foot eleven in his suede shoes, weighs ten stone wet through, has one shirt and three-and-a-half stock phrases. Under the watchful eye of Mrs. Panting, the *W.F.N.* Crochet Correspondent, the Average Film Critic was taken to a newspaper office, a trade show, a public house, a lynching, a folk-dance festival, a public-house and an inquest.

Asked his reaction to so many strange sights, the A.F.C. finished sucking the free *W.F.N.* orange and said: "Of course it was all *ever* so exciting, but I shan't be sorry to get back to my little place in the country. With his sheep and his cows a man can feel at home. What I enjoyed most was the trade show—one meets such a nice class of people. I still think that fourpence is too much to pay for a cigar."

At this juncture the A.F.C.'s wife caught him a sharp crack in the puss with her free copy of *World Film News*. That meant an orange for *her*. We saw them off from the corner of the street. "Good-bye," we said, "and *do* forget to write." And turning on our heel, we made our way dejectedly back to the office, feeling that something had gone out of our life.

As, indeed, it had.

## Can you Spell Anything Funny here?

The following team has been selected to represent the Film Industry against a team of Lady Tree-Surgeons in the *W.F.N.* Spelling Bee to be held on Putney Common next Wednesday:—

S. Goldwyn.
J. Bernerd.
S. (Snooks) Grieser.
Lord Strabolgi.
James Douglas.
F. Bartholomew (Capt.).
I. Ostrer.
T. Farr.
The Dagenham Girl Pipers.

A gong will be sounded each time a mistake is made, and residents in the district are advised to get out into the country that afternoon if they want any peace and quiet.

The winning team will meet a picked side of Covent Garden porters in the Final at Wembley Stadium in April. We must apologise to the assistant-producer who sent in his name as a contestant under the impression that he was entering for a smelling-bee. Sorry, we spelt it wrong on the handbills.

## Purely Personal

A very windy
Kind of a shindy
Is *The Hurricane.*
But then, it's Amurricane.

Women fall
For Jon Hall.
All the more so
On account of his torso.
Kindly hand us
The chest expanders.

There seems to be some disparity
Between the views on vulgarity
Possessed
By the Censor and Mae West.

If by chance
I were teamed to dance
With Eleanor Powell
I would throw in the towell.

I soon get weery
Of Wallace Beery.

Charles Boyer
Is getting coyer.

If I were Fred MacMurray
I shouldn't wurray.

Dorothy Lamour
Has plenty of allour.

I find Pat O'Brien
Rather trien.

If Ginger Rogers
Took in lodgers
I
Would apply.

Grace Moore
Is inclined to roore.
Still, she gets plenty of dough for it,
And a lot of people go for it.

I could do with more
Of Eric Blore.

## TECHNICAL HITCH

*Sir Harry Lauder has strong views on broadcasting technique, and he is the only man the B.B.C.'s engineers allow to play about with the microphone. On one occasion he demanded that a wet blanket should be wrapped round the mike.*—News Item.

And when he looked again, guess who those nice engineers had wrapped around the mike? Why, nobody else but your old friend, Sir J*h* R*i*h!

## ARABIAN NUTS

*Last night the Arabic-speaking audiences listening to the third of the special programmes on the short-wave broadcasts from Daventry were introduced to modern English dance music played by Carroll Gibbons, and European folk-tunes.*

*"Little Old Lady" and "Roses in December" were among the tunes played.*

*—News Item*

In the oasis
There are a lot of strained faces.
They are trying to remember
"Roses in December."
While behind the mosque where it's shady,
The girls are putting in a little close harmony on "Little Old Lady."

And when the boy-friend, Ali,
(A name that corresponds to the British "Charlie")
Asks them how they are
And says he is on his way to the bazaar
And how would they like him to buy them some new ribbons,
They decline—having fallen for Gibbons.

Or try this one on the desert air . . .

Forget your old hookah
And don't be a sookah,
It's time that you took a
Few lessons in swing.
Hitch up your burnooses
(That's Arab for trooses)
And hear Harry Whoosis
From Birmingham, Eng.

Come Abdul, come Ali,
For "Dinah" and "Sally"
And all Tin Pan Alley
Are crowding your air.
Would you not have preferred an
Annoyance less "murdern"
For the White Man's Worst Burden
You've now got to share.

## SAYINGS

"An English picture, even though it has Miss Bennett in the cast, or Mickey Mouse, or some other star, is not comparable with pictures made and sold in the United States."—*Judge Burnell.*

"Girls! You must have Mystery!"—*Myrna Loy.*

"I have a new respect for film stars; I am inclined to think they earn the fabulous salaries they receive."—*The Bishop of Chelmsford.*

"I wouldn't do anything to hurt religion. I go to church myself."—*Mae West.*

"I lack what is now known as glamour."—*Edward Everett Horton.*

# LORUM

dney Hobson

## SPRING MANŒUVRES

*Glamour-Sergeant Eve is preparing to answer the Call to Charms.*

*Down in Hampshire she is seductively mobilising to Get That Man—for the Hampshire Heavy Brigade of the Territorial Army.*

*Inspirer of this campaign is the Colonel commanding the Fixed Defences, Southern Command. He went to the Brigade's prize-distribution, cast a thoughtful eye over the bevy of wives, sweethearts and girl-friends, and straightway promised the commanding officer a cheque for the girl who got the most recruits for the unit during the year.*

*"Everyone knows what a subtle influence the ladies have," said the shrewed and gallant colonel.* —News Item

I myself, as fine a figure of a man as you're likely to set eyes on in a month of "Hurricanes", have already been approached by one of these fair recruiters.

I was sitting in a milk bar, moodily sipping my *agitation de lait* (milk shake to you, Mr. Goldwyn) when I felt a light touch on my arm. My hand flew instinctively to my wallet and I swung round, to find myself gazing into the smouldering eyes of La Belle * * *. I doffed my *demitasse* with mock courtesy.

"La Belle * * *?" I asked, although the mask she was wearing and the brace of horse-pistols thrust in her belt made the question superfluous.

She nodded curtly.

"Monsieur Alphonse Faute de Mieux?" she throbbed back at me.

I nodded even more curtly.

La Belle * * * twined a slim finger in the lapel of my frock-coat. "The Fifth Loamshires and I," she said softly, "have need of you."

I flushed hotly beneath my London tan.

"Let's leave the Fifth Loamshires out of this," I said with some asperity.

Miss * * * quickly ordered some more asperity, with a dash of vanilla.

"The Loamshires," she said, looking at me over the rim of her glass, "are below strength."

"Perhaps they are not eating the right kind of food," I said, with that twisted smile that has made me a *succès fou* in half the *salon bars* of the native quarter.

La Belle * * * tapped me archly on the wrist with her shooting-stick.

"Plenty of good, wholesome food, fun and football," she whispered coaxingly, "and as nice a lot of lads as you could wish to meet in a day's march." She took a pace back to watch the effect of her words.

I sat for a moment in silence. The picture she had painted was indeed a glowing one, and I, headstrong young fool that I was, felt my resistance slipping from me. I crushed a straw in my strong brown hands and spoke.

"M'mselle," I said, and my voice was hoarse with some emotion I could not put a name to, "I am ready to be measured for my mess-jacket."

My fair companion smiled cryptically; then, drawing a sheet of perfumed notepaper from her bandolier, she scribbled a few words upon it and handed it to me.

"Give this to Colonel Bloodstock," she said simply. "Tell him that the Darling of the Regiment sent you."

Then she motioned her pressgang of old Gaiety Girls nearer and I allowed myself to be bound hand and foot with blue baby-ribbon. Then a paper forage-cap was thrust on my head and I was led out, followed by cheers and an attendant with the bill.

And that, kiddies, is how I come to be sitting at my desk in this steaming outpost on the North-West Frontier. Every now and then the Colonel's little daughter looks roguishly in at the opening of my tent, only to flee as fast as her plump little legs can carry her as I playfully toss a hand-grenade at her. And here comes the Colonel now across the *veldt*, picking up litter and empty cigarette packages on the end of his sword as he comes. If the old buzzard wants to borrow my electric razor to trim his dam' camel, he's going to be unlucky. *Nemo me impune lacrossestick.*

## Attention, Horse Lovers!

*If the House of Lords has its way every horse in the country will have an undocked tail to keep the flies from tormenting it in summer.*

*By 55 votes against 20 the House gave a second reading to the Docking and Nicking of Horses (Prohibition) Bill, which forbids the docking and nicking of horses and importation of docked and nicked horses.*— News Item.

As inveterate old Dockers and Nickers ourselves, we should like to see introduced a Docking and Nicking of Film Producers Bill, compelling all producers to carry a small portable tail or switch to prevent the flies from settling on them all the year round.

The actual process of nicking—cutting the tail muscles, bandaging and holding in position with mechanical devices—has, of course, been prevalent in the Industry for some years.

"SAY, WHO IS THIS AURORA BOREALIS DAME? WHY AIN'T WE SIGNED HER UP?"

**"What's on at the Grand to-night?"**

# BOOK REVIEWS

## *How to Write and Sell Film Stories*

by Frances Marion (John Miles, 12*s.* 6*d.*)

From time to time books appear purporting to tell the novice and the established writer how to write stories for the screen. They appear with such regularity because screen writing offers the most lucrative rewards to the writer, yet while the writers are most voluminous on structure and method, they supply remarkably little data on the selling of the stories once written. *How to Write and Sell Film Stories* by Frances Marion is no exception. The beginner is told that if he sends his manuscript to the movie makers it is bound to come back marked "Returned unopened". Three ways are suggested of marketing stories. First, "If you know a studio executive, producer or star who will take your story to the story editor or submit it with a note vouching for your responsibility and integrity, you may be sure it will receive a careful reading." Second, ". . . to get work in any capacity at a studio and, when you have been accepted as a trustworthy person, to offer your stories direct to the story editor." Neither of these two ways of getting screen stories read can be adopted by more than a very small number of people and Miss Marion's third and last advice is to use an established agent. This aspect of Miss Marion's book is considered first because it is on this aspect that the book is sold according to the publisher's "blurb".

In point of fact, very few stories are bought as originals from unknown authors and the studios keep a very sharp eye on all other methods of literary expression, so that if your story is published in a magazine there is as much chance of selling it as if it were sent to the studios. This aspect of the book is unimportant, but as a whole the book ranks high in film literature. Miss Frances Marion is entitled to all honour as the most consistently successful story writer for the screen, to be ranked with the legendary names of Grover Whalen, Charles MacArthur, William Slavens McNutt and Ben Hecht. She has been in the industry for twenty years, since the days in fact when it became an industry. For years she has been the mainstay of Metro's story department, a few of her pictures being *Big House*, *Camille*, *Dinner at Eight*, *The Champ*, *Min and Bill;* a steady output of box-office pictures. She is reputed to be the highest paid story writer in the business.

The book reveals Miss Marion to be a craftsman in the best sense, a person to whom film is a living article and a person who finds the fashioning of that article an art. As an analysis of movie structure this is a book for film technicians, particularly in this country. After discussing producers' general requirements she deals with each of the following topics, giving a chapter to each: characterisation; plots; the form of the film story; the theme and its essentials; dialogue and its special uses; atmosphere, pace and suspense; the effective presentation of emotional reactions. While the book is written from a materialist point of view and is packed with common sense matters, there is a chapter pompously called "Dramaturgy", which, though slightly faltering, is the nearest exposition of the film as an art that has yet been published, *pace* the highbrows. The aim is perhaps unconscious, but because Miss Marion has both feet on the ground and because of script-like marshalling of facts, one begins to believe that the lumps of celluloid one has been playing with might be an art form. The highbrow jongleurs who theorise on cinema have never thought as deeply as this Hollywood writer at whom they have so often sneered.

As literary work the book is undistinguished, Miss Marion is a woman of facts and not a stringer of sentences. At the same time the book is studded with that conscious literary culture that began with Washington Irving and Emerson, and finds expression to-day in the works of Maxwell Anderson. It is essentially a groping book ; the revelation of the chapter called "Dramaturgy" does not become a philosophy. Like most studio writers, the writer endeavours to bend all her arguments to a quotation from a gentleman called Cosmo Hamilton which appears at the beginning of the book.

"Fashions change and tastes differ, but in the hearts of the great theatre-going public there is a longing for romance, for idealism, for the reward of virtue and the punishment of vice. Dull lives require a little joy, and every man and woman, however small or great, comes to the theatre to sit on a magic carpet and be wafted to the place which is seen only in dreams." Now, that is no basis for an art, and Miss Marion herself realises this for she gives another longer quotation from a more distinguished gentleman, Anton Chekhov.

"Let me remind you that the writers who we say are for all time or are simply good, and who intoxicate us, have one common and very important characteristic; they are going towards something and are summoning you toward it too, and you feel, not with your mind, but with your whole being, that they have some object, just like the ghost of Hamlet's father, who did not come and disturb the imagination for nothing . . . . And we? What of us?

"We paint life as it is, but beyond that—nothing at all. . . . We have neither immediate nor remote aims, and in our souls there is a great empty space. We have no politics, we do not believe in revolution, we have no God, we are not afraid of ghosts, and I personally am not afraid even of death and blindness. One who wants nothing, hopes for nothing, and fears nothing, cannot be an artist."

That there is not a "great empty space" in Miss Marion's soul is amply demonstrated by her book, but to achieve the ideals expressed therein she should take heed that the great writers are "going towards something."

D.F.T.

## *1938 Photography Year Book*

(Cosmopolitan Press Ltd., 21*s.*)

Master photographers from every part of the world annually submit thousands of prints to the Editor of the *Photography Year Book*. From these, more than 1,600 have this year been selected, providing a magnificent exhibition of camera-craft in the pages of this fine volume.

Amateur and professional photographers will find much of interest in the 1938 *Photography Year Book*. The camera worker can broaden the scope of his activities by seeing what others are doing.

After dealing specially with pictorial and commercial photography, the book examines trick photography and camera-work as an aid in science, and in decoration, for posters, catalogues, etc. There is also a detailed and well-illustrated section of advertisements.

## *Promised Land*

by Cedric Belfrage (Gollancz, 8*s.* 6*d.*)

What is the matter with our writers? Why are they so squeamish? Their inheritance from Shakespeare and Fielding and Swift was one of gusty bawdiness; to-day our writers seem to have lost their heritage. A stream of them have been going steadily to and from Hollywood, bright, strong, young men, men who, you would think, could do anything, but, after a few months in the town that influences world taste, they all sit down and start to write the most sorry tales of what a bad place Hollywood is and what low people film people are.

They insult us; they deny the right of a casting director to have a double bed in his office; they even go so far as to grudge the producer his "perks"—the kindly, hoary old producer, who never did anything worse than seduce a blind girl and pinch her pennies. Are these sexless young men in their right senses when they rake up old stories about Fatty Arbuckle, a man who devoted and gave his life in the end for the glory of our art. True, a woman died in a peculiar way in his flat, but anyone might do that kind of thing when drunk. Besides, Fatty Arbuckle was an artist. And do these men like Belfrage not realise that they must not take in vain the name of Rudy the Wop, alias Valentino? Don't a hundred sacred flames burn to his phallic memory?

Belfrage's book gives a fairly good, though dry, picture of the people that have had, and are having, such an influence on the rest of the world. And you may ask yourself after reading the book whether it is good for these people to have such power. It is unfortunate that the end of the book tails off into an Aimée Macpherson sermon on how the business is being righted. For however good communism is, I should say it is as far from Hollywood as it is from the Vatican.

J.T.

LONDON THEATRE
CONCERTS
MOZART
March 13th
March 27th
April 10th
May 8th
TICKETS: 2s. 6d., 3s. 6d. & 6s.
CAMBRIDGE THEATRE

# BOOK REVIEWS

## *The Summing Up*

by Somerset Maugham (Heinemann, 8*s.* 6*d.*)

WHAT goes on in the heart and mind of a man who writes, why and how and with what skill he does it, what belief or lack of belief attends him in his work, what is the kind and degree of his disappointment, by what measure he estimates his achievement: all of this Somerset Maugham stuffs into his "Summing Up." It is not an autobiography, but an *apologia pro vita sua*, and, when a man like Somerset Maugham gets down to *apologias* in his sixties, and after a great deal of hearty success, the fun is liable to be very good.

As a practitioner of a companion art, I am interested. Writing is one of the last corners in which a man may, with no greater capital than a penny notebook and a ha'penny pencil, bring his world alive. In films, we need thousands, and from the word go we are bound in responsibility to a dozen companions-in-arms. Our financiers have to be wheedled, and our sponsors made to share our inspiration: a task of teaching or preaching which is a whole job in itself.

The moment we get down to our craft of film our personal vanities, whether we like it or not, must out the window. Technical and creative partners surround us, and only an idiot will pretend of any film that he has been the "onlie begetter". The creative force lies in the unit, and those personal credits which flutter across the opening of a film, though they may comfort the wives and mothers of the individual film makers, give no picture of the process. I never saw a good film happen, except that three or four heads were devoted commonly to it, with personal nonsense out. I never saw personal nonsense come in and a film prosper.

Here, then, we have a situation of some social significance. On the one hand is the development in film of the unit artist, combining half a dozen powers of penetration, which may range in their quality from the purely scientific to the subjective. On the other hand, is the old one-man band of a writer giving us, so bravely, his personal act. Which is more equipped to picture our complex modern world? Does the individual find a larger or a lesser individuality in the team, and was Plato wrong? Is the one-man band strong enough in his simple soul to put his shoulder under Pelion? Read Maugham's "Summing Up", and you will find some rich evidence, one way and another.

It is, on the whole, a pathetic document, this apologia of a successful writer. About to die, our Mr. Maugham is worried. The critics have been unkind to him. They have called him a good craftsman, and no more. A later generation has not recognised his profundity. Again and again it rankles. For a space, the patient drops off into a quiet heart-to-heart talk on the technique of the stage, and excellent stuff it is, but back comes the cry "ma'sel, ma'sel", choking our successful writer out of countenance.

*Garbo in Maugham's "The Painted Veil"*

A pity it is, because Maugham is in truth a good craftsman. His patient pursuit of dramatic success and popular acceptance does honour to his courage, as well as to his skill. His careful study of popular values, and the consolidation of his success, show him to be a good business man. His desire to make the most of his talent while the public mood lasted marks him as a sensible and and practical fellow, as so many of our well-known writers are. Who, even, will blame Maugham for accepting the luxuries that success has given him? What craftsman who has taken the path of the sensible and practical would not?

The trouble is that Maugham hopes for salvation hereafter. That denial of his profundity irks him. There is an element of nostalgia as he sums up his life achievement. He does not believe in God, but spends three chapters in explaining exactly why he does not, so that God, presumably, will take note of the fact that he has really given some thought to the subject. It would be easy to say that you cannot expect anything else from a man who does not believe in God. It is the simplest way of saying that when you are so much concerned with yourself, you are bound to miss the bigger and happier swing of the objective life: that you will for ever be fanning the hereafter and never possessing it.

But there is a more amusing way of defining the trouble. I begin to think that the day of the great story-teller is over, and simply because it is, increasingly, this personal and self-examining pursuit which Maugham so brilliantly describes. The simple talesman can no longer hold a course among the complex affairs of to-day. They cannot be compressed into his narrow act. The personal story, on which he carries his articulation of the world, becomes an ever feebler vehicle. His personal temperament, be it ever so rich, has not gusto enough to express the bearing of mass events. He is a pea-shooter storming skyscrapers.

Examine how the writers of to-day blow up their balloons to look like the whole world: intensifying on sex and psychology, whickering over escapes into Art (whatever that may mean), cross-sectioning to imitate film technique, pastiching a thousand styles to be everything by starts and nothing long, applying the measure of space-time to the sad old paraphernalia of the personal. Why, only old Wells and old Shaw seem to know for a certainty, and a long time ago, that the personal gambit is dead as the dodo and no longer worth pursuing.

We shall always want stories, you say. The answer is: "Yes, but not seriously," and that is exactly where Mr. Maugham came in. "Yes, but not seriously" gave him a fortune, and it is "Yes, but not seriously" which worries him now, and is going to deny him that importance he most seeks. Let us be grateful to him for, himself, so brilliantly, telling us why. He has summed up not only himself, but, I think, a romantic and dying school of literature.

JOHN GRIERSON

## *Three Todays*

A Novel by E. G. Cousins (Methuen, 7*s.* 6*d.*)

Mr. Cousins covers some twenty-eight centuries in his novel, but he actually deals with three periods; ancient Egypt in its declining days; Tintagel in the Arthurian period; and modern London. The characters are the same in each period, being reincarnated. The final part of the novel is set in the film industry—the cinema appears and reappears throughout the book, and we get glimpses of its earliest forms in the other periods—and Mr. Cousins brings to light some of the practices which have made the business side of films one of the dirtiest rackets ever.

The main character in the final episode is a realist producer, who attempts to make films without stars, putting real people in the parts. He sells his idea for a film to two financiers, for four thousand pounds, and they resell half-interest to another financier, for the same amount. The financial side wants stars and box office appeal in the story, the producer doesn't. The struggle over this, and the defeat of the producer by his shady backers, is the story. Characters are unreal but, considering the treatment difficulties created by Mr. Cousins in attempting this story, he has written a fairly readable novel.

E.S.

# FILM GUIDE

## *Shorts*

**Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves** (Puppets in Gaspar-colour).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Slatinay and George Pal.

| | |
|---|---|
| BELFAST: Apollo | Mar. 2, 1 day |
| BLAENAU FESTINIOG: Forum | Mar. 31, 3 days |
| COEDPOETH: Regent | Mar. 17, 3 days |
| GATESHEAD: Askew | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| HUNSTANTON: Capitol | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| HACKNEY: Pavilion | Mar. 22, 1 day |
| KELTY: Gothenburgh | Mar. 16, 1 day |
| KENNINGTON: Princes | Mar. 23, 1 day |
| LIVERPOOL: Mere Lane Cinema | Mar. 28, 3 days |
| Princes | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| LONDON: Grand, Edgware Road | Mar. 21, 1 day |
| LLANIDLOES: Cinema | Mar. 10, 3 days |
| NEWCASTLE: News Theatre | Mar. 28, 6 days |
| PECKHAM: Gaumont Palace | Mar. 24, 1 day |
| PENISTONE: Town Hall | Mar. 14, 3 days |
| ROTHESAY: Ritz | Mar. 9, 4 days |
| SCOTSWOOD: Regent | Mar. 21, 3 days |

**Coal Face** (Poetic treatment of coal mining).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit.
*SOUND PRODUCTION:* Alberto Cavalcanti.

| | |
|---|---|
| KELTY: Gothenburgh | Mar. 3, 2 days |

**Cover to Cover** (Documentary of book production).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films.
*DIRECTION:* Alexander Shaw.

| | |
|---|---|
| ATHLONE: Savoy | Mar. 14, 3 days |
| CHILTON: Lyric | Mar. 10, 3 days |
| COXHOE: Avenue | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| GATESHEAD: Askew | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| INGLETON: Cinema | Mar. 21, 3 days |
| LLANIDLOES: Cinema | Mar. 10, 3 days |
| RUABON: Cinema | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| SCOTSWOOD: Regent | Mar. 14, 3 days |
| SOMERCOTES: Empire | Mar. 3, 3 days |

**Colourful Cairo** (Travelogue).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.

| | |
|---|---|
| ATHLONE: Savoy | Mar. 14, 3 days |
| KELTY: Gothenburgh | Mar. 21, 2 days |
| LONDON: Monseigneur, Picadilly,W. | Mar. 28, 4 days |
| MIDDLETON: Cosy | Mar. 4, 2 days |
| SCOTSWOOD: Regent | Mar. 10, 3 days |

**Insect Oddities** (A nature study).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.
*PRODUCTION:* Cedric Mallabey.

| | |
|---|---|
| BARNET: Cinema | Mar. 14, 6 days |
| COLWYN BAY: Odeon | Mar. 28, 3 days |
| ISLEWORTH: Odeon | Mar. 21, 6 days |
| LONDON: Eros News Theatre, Piccadilly Circus | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| Monseigneur, Leicester Sq. | Mar. 14, 3 days |
| Sphere, Tottenham Court. Rd. | Mar. 14, 3 days |
| Strand News Theatre, Agar St. | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| Victoria Station News Theatre | Mar. 28, 3 days |
| Walpole, Ealing | Mar. 14, 6 days |
| NORBURY: Rex | Mar. 6, 1 day |

**Islands of the Bounty** (Islands associated with the famous mutiny).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.

| | |
|---|---|
| BURNTISLAND: Cinema House | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| BALLSBRIDGE: Astoria | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| COED POETH: Regent | Mar. 17, 3 days |
| CASTLE DOUGLAS: C.D. Cinema | Mar. 17, 3 days |
| DONAGHADEE: Regal | Mar. 11, 2 days |
| MIDDLETON: Cosy | Mar. 4, 2 days |
| NEWMARKET: Kingsway | Mar. 14, 3 days |
| SWALWELL: Cosy | Mar. 31, 3 days |
| SCOTSWOOD: Regent | Mar. 10, 3 days |
| STOKESLEY: Lyric | Mar. 10, 3 days |
| WAKEFIELD: Palace | Mar. 21, 3 days |
| WALTON-ON-THAMES: Capitol | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| WOODHOUSE: Palace | Mar. 3, 3 days |

EDUCATIONAL AND ENTERTAINMENT FILMS
at the Tatler Theatre,
Charing Cross Road

*Saturday morning, March 5th.*
11 *a.m. to* 12 *noon*
Dick Turpin (based on Harrison Ainsworth's 'Rookwood'), Ali Baba (coloured puppets).

*March* 12*th*, 11 *a.m. to* 12 *noon*, 2 *to* 3 *p.m.*
*SCOTLAND and WALES*
For Matriculation and General School Certificate Students.

*March* 9*th*, at 11 *a.m. HISTORY*
Mediæval Village, 19th Century Social History, Changes in Franchise since 1832, Development of Railways, Coal Industry, Expansion of Germany, 1870-1914.

*March* 26*th*, *at* 11 *a.m. BIOLOGY*
(*Zoology section*): Amoeba, the Frog, Hydra, Earthworm, Tortoiseshell Butterfly, Echinus, Breathing, Blood Circulation.

**Lancashire Lakeland** (Scenic beauties of Lakeland).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.
*PRODUCTION:* Pennine Films Ltd.

| | |
|---|---|
| ASHTON-U-LYNE: Majestic | Mar. 28, 6 days |
| BIRKENHEAD: Rialto, Bebington | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| DARLINGTON: Alhambra | Mar. 24, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Casino | Mar. 21, 6 days |
| Tatler | Mar. 17, 3 days |
| PRESTON: Empress | Mar. 10, 3 days |
| SOUTHPORT: Palladium | Mar. 13, 7 days |

**Men Against the Sea** (Documentary of North Sea trawling).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.
*DIRECTION:* Vernon Sewell.

| | |
|---|---|
| CHORLEY: Theatre Royal | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| HENDON: Classic | Mar. 20, 4 days |
| KINGUSSIE: Picture House | Mar. 4, 2 days |
| OSWALDTWISTLE: Palladium | Mar. 31, 3 days |
| RISHTON: Empire | Mar. 3, 3 days |

**Netherlands Old and New** (Travelogue of Holland and the Island of Curacao).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.
*PRODUCTION:* Cedric Mallabey

| | |
|---|---|
| DORCHESTER: Palace | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| EGREMONT: Gaumont Palace | Mar. 7, 6 days |
| FROME: Palace | Mar. 10, 3 days |
| GLOSSOP: Empire | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| JERSEY: Opera House | Mar. 10, 3 days |
| LONDON: Eros News Theatre, Piccadilly Circus | Mar. 14, 3 days |
| Victoria Station News Theatre | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| Waterloo Station News Theatre | Mar. 24, 3 days |
| World News, Praed St. | Mar. 31, 3 days |
| MORECAMBE: Tower | Mar. 27, 1 day |
| STRATFORD-ON-AVON: Picture House | Mar. 31, 3 days |
| WITHINGTON: Scala | Mar. 10, 3 days |

**Night Mail** (Documentary of the northward trip of the postal special).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Basil Wright, Harry Watt.

| | |
|---|---|
| ARDRISHAIG: Cinema | Mar. 7, 4 days |
| COVENTRY: Forum | Mar. 6, 1 day |
| HARRINGAY: Premier | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| INVERARY: Cinema | Mar. 7, 4 days |
| LOSSIEMOUTH: Town Hall | Mar. 17, 3 days |
| LOCHGILPHEAD: Cinema | Mar. 7, 4 days |
| TOBERMORY: Cinema | Mar. 7, 4 days |

**Nomad in the North** (Scenic film of Norway).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.
*PRODUCTION & DIRECTION:* C. E. Hodges.

| | |
|---|---|
| BOURNEMOUTH: Premier News | Mar. 21, 6 days |
| FARNWORTH: Ritz | Mar. 21, 3 days |
| KIRKCALDY: Regal | Mar. 24, 3 days |
| MOTHERWELL: Rex | Mar. 28, 3 days |
| STRATFORD-ON-AVON: Picture House | Mar. 14, 3 days |
| TOOTING: Classic | Mar. 17, 3 days |

**People in the Parks.**
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films.
*DIRECTION:* Paul Burnford.

| | |
|---|---|
| BRADFORD: Elysian | Mar. 24, 3 days |
| LEEDS: Abbey | Mar. 10, 3 days |
| LONDON: World News Theatre | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| NOTTINGHAM: News Theatre | Mar. 21, 3 days |
| RETFORD: Majestic | Mar. 17, 3 days |
| SCOTSWOOD: Regent | Mar. 24, 3 days |
| TOWYN: Cinema | Mar. 28, 3 days |
| WIGAN: Court | Mar. 7, 3 days |

**Secret Hiding Places** (Priest holes to be found in English country houses.)
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.
*DIRECTION:* Granville Squiers.

| | |
|---|---|
| KIRKCALDY: Palladium | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| LANCASTER: County | Mar. 7, 6 days |
| NORWICH: Haymarket | Mar. 21, 6 days |
| TODMORDEN: Olympia | Mar. 31, 3 days |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# Shorts (*Contd.*)

**Secrets of the Stars** (Spotlight on British stages and studios).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.
*PRODUCTION:* Argyle British Productions Ltd.

| | |
|---|---|
| BOURNEMOUTH: Premier News | Mar. 14, 6 days |
| LANCASTER: Palace | Mar. 7, 6 days |
| LEEDS: Holbeck, Queens | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| LONDON: World News Theatre Praed Street | Mar. 14, 3 days |
| PORTSMOUTH: Theatre Royal | Mar. 23, 7 days |
| WIDNES: Premier | Mar. 21, 3 days |
| WELSHPOOL: Clive | Mar. 3, 3 days |

**Six-Thirty Collection** (Documentary of the West End sorting office).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* John Grierson for G.P.O. Film Unit.
*DIRECTION:* Edgar Anstey.

| | |
|---|---|
| AMLWCH: Royal, Anglesey | Mar. 3, 3 days |

**Snow Water** (Water power in the Swiss mountains).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.
*DIRECTION:* H. Dreyer.

| | |
|---|---|
| CROYDON: Classic | Mar. 10, 3 days |
| ISLEWORTH: Odeon | Mar. 27, 1 day |
| LANCASTER: Palace | Mar. 28, 6 days |

**Southward Ho!** (A journey across Franz-Josef glacier).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.
*PRODUCTION:* C. E. Hodges.

| | |
|---|---|
| ALLOA: La Scala | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| DUNDEE: Empire | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| GLASGOW: Commodore, Scotstoun | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| B.B. Cinerama | Mar. 14, 3 days |
| GLOSSOP: Empire | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| GAINSBOROUGH: Grand | Mar. 24, 3 days |
| HEREFORD: Odeon | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| KIRKCALDY: Rialto | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Rd. | Mar. 3, 4 days |
| Victoria Stn. News Th. | Mar. 24, 3 days |
| MOTHERWELL: Pavilion | Mar. 31, 3 days |
| SIDMOUTH: Grand | Mar. 24, 3 days |
| SOUTHAMPTON: Cinenews | Mar. 20, 4 days |
| WITHINGTON: Scala | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| WARRINGTON: Odeon | Mar. 28, 6 days |

**Sunny Tessin** (Survey of the Canton Tessin, Southern Switzerland).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.

| | |
|---|---|
| BRIGHOUSE: Albert Picture House | Mar. 31, 3 days |
| BARNSLEY: Empire | Mar. 28, 6 days |
| CINDERFORD: Palace | Mar. 31, 3 days |
| DARLINGTON: Alhambra | Mar. 7, 6 days |
| KETTERING: Electric Pavilion | Mar. 31, 3 days |
| LONDON: Kings Hall, Penge | Mar. 31, 3 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Empress | Mar. 21, 6 days |
| Gaumont, Princes Park | Mar. 24, 3 days |
| Plaza | Mar. 24, 3 days |
| Tatler | Mar. 14, 3 days |
| MANCHESTER: Regal, Levenshulme | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| NEW BRIGHTON: Trocadero | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| REDDITCH: Gaumont Palace | Mar. 24, 3 days |
| WAKEFIELD: Empire | Mar. 28, 6 days |

**This Other Eden** (A trip down the river Eden, in Westmorland).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.
*PRODUCTION:* Pennine Films Ltd.

| | |
|---|---|
| BIRKENHEAD: Plaza | Mar. 28, 6 days |
| CARLISLE: Palace | Mar. 28, 6 days |
| CROYDON: Hippodrome | Mar. 6, 1 day |
| HYTHE: Kent, Grove | Mar. 21, 3 days |
| INVERNESS: Empire | Mar. 10, 3 days |
| LONDON: Monseigneur, Charing X Rd. | Mar. 17, 3 days |
| NORBURY: Rex | Mar. 20, 1 day |
| NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE: News Theatre | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| SIDMOUTH: Grand | Mar. 14, 3 days |
| SOUTHWOLD: Cinema | Mar. 7, 3 days |
| ST. LEONARDS: Kinema | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| SOUTHPORT: Palace | Mar. 3, 3 days |

**To-day We Live** (The depressed areas of Wales).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films.
*DIRECTION:* Ralph Bond and R. I. Grierson.

| | |
|---|---|
| BATLEY: Victoria | Mar. 14, 3 days |
| CREWE: Palace | Mar. 28, 6 days |
| CARCROFT: Cinema | Mar. 4, 2 days |
| EDLINGTON: Cinema | Mar. 25, 3 days |
| THURNSCOE: Cinema | Mar. 21, 3 days |

**Town and Gown** (Buildings, scenery and life of Oxford and Cambridge).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.
*PRODUCTION:* Peter Collin.

| | |
|---|---|
| BRIDGWATER: Palace | Mar. 21, 3 days |
| CIRENCESTER: Picture House | Mar. 28, 3 days |
| CHIPPENHAM: Gaumont Palace | Mar. 10, 3 days |
| CHEPSTOW: Palace | Mar. 10, 3 days |
| EGREMONT: Gaumont Palace | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| HYTHE: Grove | Mar. 24, 3 days |
| JERSEY: Opera House | Mar. 28, 6 days |
| LIVERPOOL: Bedford, Walton | Mar. 21, 6 days |
| Gaumont, Princes Park | Mar. 17, 3 days |
| Plaza | Mar. 17, 3 days |
| Rivoli, Aigburth | Mar. 31, 3 days |
| Tatler | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| MOTHERWELL: La Scala | Mar. 7, 6 days |
| MANSFIELD: Rock P.H. | Mar. 17, 3 days |
| NORTH SHIELDS: Princes | Mar. 28, 6 days |
| NEW BRIGHTON: Trocadero | Mar. 21, 3 days |
| SALTAIRE: Picture House | Mar. 28, 3 days |
| SOUTHPORT: Palladium | Mar. 14, 6 days |
| WEYMOUTH: Regent | Mar. 14, 6 days |
| WISHAW: Cinema | Mar. 7, 6 days |

**Tropical Springtime** (Travelogue on Costa Rica).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.
*PRODUCTION:* Cedric Mallabey.

| | |
|---|---|
| CHEPSTOW: Palace | Mar. 28, 3 days |
| EGREMONT: Gaumont Palace | Mar. 28, 6 days |
| LONDON: Tatler, Charing Cross Rd. | Mar. 14, 7 days |
| MONMOUTH: Picture House | Mar. 24, 3 days |
| NORTH SHIELDS: Princes | Mar. 21, 6 days |

**Way to the Sea** (Documentary of the roads and railways from London to the coast).
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* Strand Films.
*DIRECTION:* J. B. Holmes.

| | |
|---|---|
| BRADFORD: Elysium | Mar. 24, 3 days |
| KELTY: Gothenburgh | Mar. 28, 2 days |
| LIMERICK: Lyric | Mar. 31, 3 days |
| NEWFIELD: Grand | Mar. 10, 3 days |
| OXFORD: Scala | Mar. 6, 4 days |
| SALCOMBE: Cinema | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| STOCKPORT: Brinksway | Mar. 11, 2 days |
| SWINDON: Rink | Mar. 21, 6 days |
| TOWYN: Cinema | Mar. 28, 3 days |
| WHALLEY: Co-op Cinema | Mar. 10, 3 days |

**Wheel and Woe** (The evolution of the motor-car).
*DISTRIBUTION:* Kinograph.
*PRODUCTION:* Liberty.
*DIRECTION:* W. G. Duncalf.

| | |
|---|---|
| BARNET: Cinema | Mar. 7, 6 days |
| BOURNEMOUTH: Premier News | Mar. 28, 6 days |
| CHATHAM: Electric | Mar. 27, 7 days |
| CHORLEY: Theatre Royal | Mar. 21, 3 days |
| HULL: National | Mar. 10, 3 days |
| LEITH: Capitol | Mar. 28, 3 days |
| NORTHWICH: Pavilion | Mar. 3, 3 days |
| NEWTOWN: Regent | Mar. 21, 3 days |
| OSWALDTWISTLE: Palladium | Mar. 17, 3 days |
| TODMORDEN: Olympia | Mar. 14, 3 days |
| WELSHPOOL: Clive | Mar. 24, 3 days |

**Windmill in Barbados**
*DISTRIBUTION:* A.B.F.D.
*PRODUCTION:* E.M.B.
*DIRECTOR:* Basil Wright.

| | |
|---|---|
| COEDPOETH: Regent | Mar. 10, 3 days |

# Foreign Films

**The Broken Jug** (German).
*DIRECTION:* Gustav Veicky
*STARRING:* Emil Jannings, Lina Carstiens, Angela Sallaker

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Berkeley | Indefinitely |

**Un Carnet de Bal** (Winner of the Mussolini Cup—French).
*DIRECTION:* Julien Duvivier
*STARRING:* Françoise Rosay, Harry Baur, Pierre Blanchar, Fernandel, Raimu, Robert Lynen

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Studio One | Indefinitely |

**La Grande Illusion** (French).
*PRODUCTION:* Réalisation d'Art Cinématographique
*DIRECTION:* Jean Renoir
*STARRING:* Erich von Stroheim, Jean Gabin, Dita Parlo

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Academy | Till end of March |

**Hortobagy** (Hungarian).
*DIRECTION:* Georg Hollering

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Academy | Following *La Grande Illusion* |

**La Mort du Cygne** (French).
*PRODUCTION:* Les Films Osso
*DIRECTION:* Jean Benoit-Levy
*STARRING:* Jean Perier, Mady Berry, The Corps de Ballet from the Paris Opera House

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Curzon | Till end of March |

**Nina Petrovna** (French).
*DIRECTION:* V. Tourjansky
*STARRING:* Fernand Graby, Isa Miranda

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Curzon | Following *La Mort du Cygne* |

**The Oyster Princess** (German).
*PRODUCTION:* Algassa Films, Berlin
*DIRECTION:* E. W. Emo
*STARRING:* Gusti Wolf, Theo Lingen

| | |
|---|---|
| LONDON: Berkeley | Following *The Broken Jug* |


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In the course of processing by the reversal method (the cost of which, naturally, is included in the price of these films) *exposure mistakes are automatically compensated for* by means of a photo-electric control device, which is exclusive to the treatment of Ciné-Kodak film. Thus, even with considerable errors of exposure in either direction, you can be sure of pictures rich in tone and detail, and of a constant brightness on the screen.

Look at the accompanying illustrations. They are enlargements from two rolls of Ciné-Kodak Pan. Film, both of them over-exposed from *f*5.6 to *f*1.9, and under-exposed from *f*11 to *f*16—the correct stop being *f*8. The left strip shows you how you are "punished" for your errors by straight processing; the right strip shows how the Reversal Process "lets you off," giving you positives of an almost constant density whatever the vagaries of your exposures.

Another big advantage of Ciné-Kodak Reversal Films is their almost complete absence of graininess when projected. In the course of processing, the negative image, consisting of the larger grains, is bleached out, leaving only the minute unexposed grains to form the positive that you see on the screen. *This applies with equal force to the duplicates which by the same reversal process can be made from the original positive.*

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**CINÉ-KODAK 'EIGHT' PANCHROMATIC FILM.** *A superfine-grain film, for the Ciné-Kodak Eight.*

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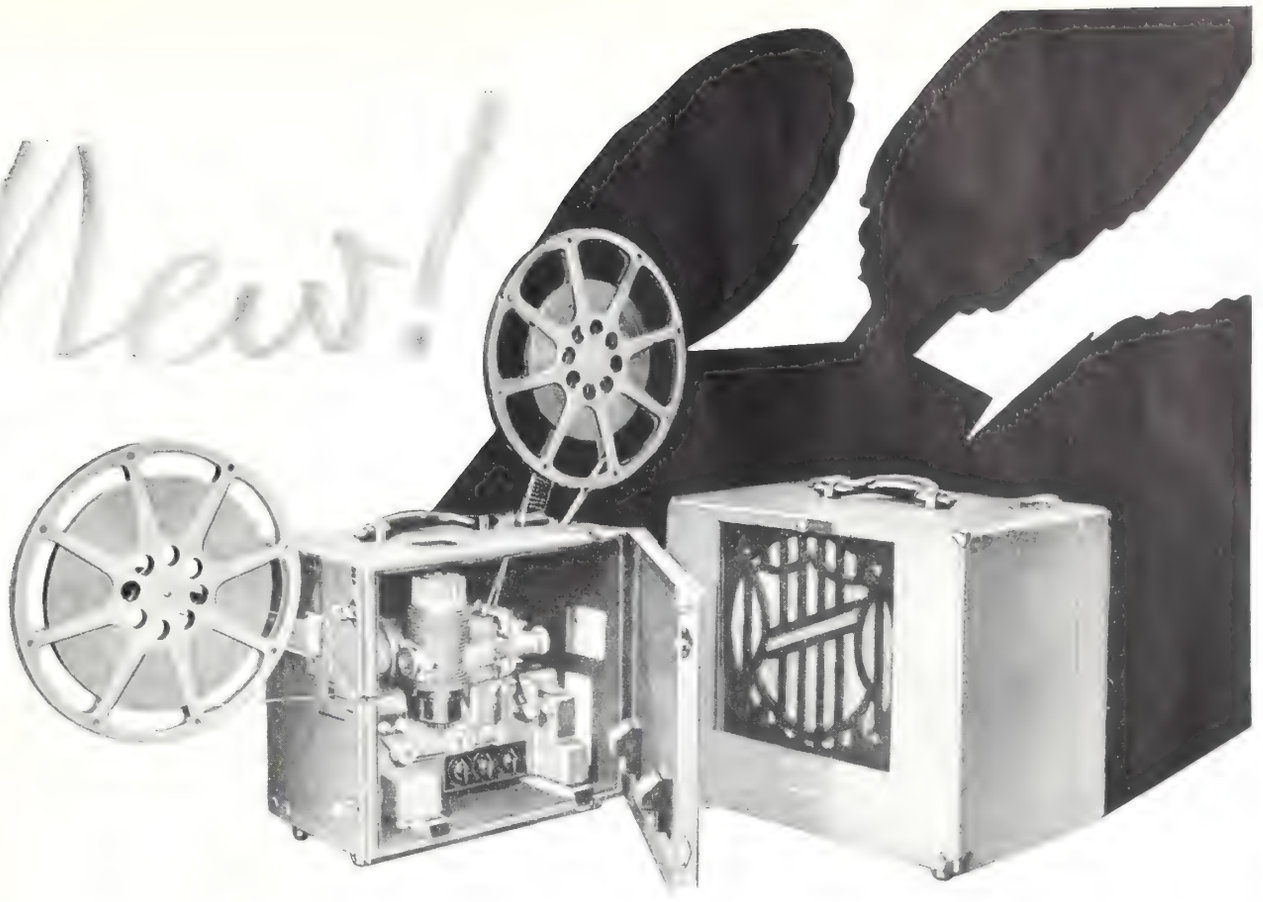


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